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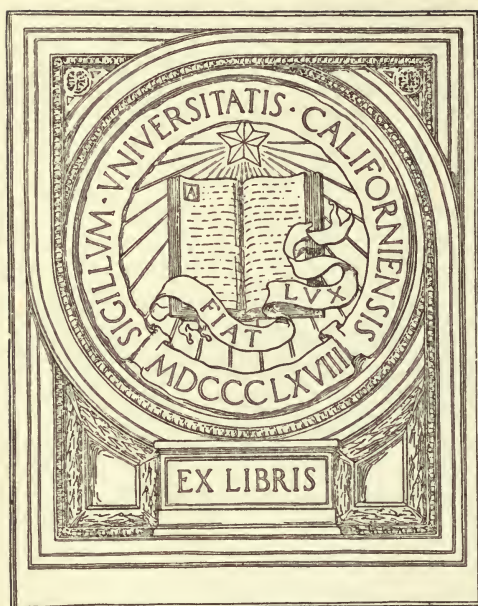
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THE NEW GOVERNMENT

A ROMANCE OF ANCIENT PERSIA.

BY AUSTIN C. BURDICK. *[signed]*

[Cobb, Sylvanus]



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THE KING AND COBBLER.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE CAPTURE.

AMONG all the cities of old, the ruins of which are now left to tell of the mighty age that has long since passed away, none exceeded in extent, in wealth, or in grandeur, Persepolis, the chief capital of ancient Persia. At the foot of a steep, rugged mountain, was extended a wide plain, watered by a goodly river. Upon all hands this plain was shut in by high cliffs of rock, looming darkly in the distance, leaving the level space some five-and-twenty miles in length, and upon this was the city built, occupying the whole vast area. The wealth of the royal palace almost exceeds belief. It was a vast structure, serving not only for the royal residence, but also for a citadel and bulwark. Its colonnade of massive pillars still stands, and is a fit object of wonder. These pillars are of gray marble and seventy feet high, and their capitals, which are of an order of architecture differing from any other then in use, are beautiful in the extreme. The interior of this kingly abode was literally cased with gold and precious stones, and to count or estimate the wealth there displayed, were a task beyond the ability of one man. And then other evidences of grandeur were built in the city, and upon all hands were to be seen sculptures and towers, and courts and monuments. And as though the vast plain gave not room enough for the ingenuity of the sculptors, the faces of the very rocks that

formed the cliff wall of the city were cut and carved in a most elaborate and finished manner. Into the faces of the larger rocks were cut tombs and sepulchral chambers, with beautiful porticos richly sculptured from the solid cliff.

Truly the king of Persia had wealth, for his capital contained within itself the wealth of a nation. And he had power, for thousands on thousands bowed down to do him homage, and princes and potentates acknowledged his authority.

Next in importance among the palaces of Persepolis to that of the king was the palace of Rustem, one of the most powerful satraps, or governors, of the realm. Rustem was now past the meridian of life, but still strong and vigorous, and fond of all those manly sports which were the delight of the warrior race of that period. He was a favorite of the king, a friend to those who bowed to him, and sometimes generous and benevolent to the poor. He could be warm and ardent in his attachments, and he could love with his whole heart; but there was no principle, no moral obligation, felt by him. He was the slave of impulse, and the owner of a will that would not bend. Very slight causes would attract his friendship, and causes just as slight would arouse his anger and hate. Above all things else did he love to be honored and obeyed and flattered. Disobey

him, and he was your enemy; trample upon his authority, and his hate was deadly. Under such circumstances the friendship of years would be cast off in an instant, and his dagger might seek the very heart he had hung upon in love for a long, long while.

Such was Rustem, and such was the man upon whom the king relied for much of his power and advice. Of course such a man would have many friends and some enemies; he would have strong friends and enemies most bitter. One thing alone troubled Rustem exceedingly. He had yet no children. He had married many wives, but no heir came yet to inherit his title and his wealth. He at times wished that some one would give him a child, for he felt that there was a very large space in his heart at present unoccupied. Perhaps it was so, for the satrap had now passed over thirty years of maturity—thirty years had passed away since he became of parental age, and during all that time he had prayed for a child. He did not know that his heart was already filled with hate where love might have come in; he imagined that about the half of his whole heart was dying for the want of occupation, and that occupation could be afforded only by the presence of a son. Thus stood Rustem, the satrap, and he felt that God had given him little to enjoy since he had given him no child.

It was a morning in early summer. Rustem had been engaged one whole month in business for the king, and now he was determined to have some recreation. He took with him twenty men in all, armed with axes, spears, javelins, bows and knives, and with the best horses the kingdom could afford, he set out. His course was to the northeast, towards the Hetzendarra Mountains, where there were to be found all sorts of wild game, even to camels and buffaloes. The first night Rustem stopped at a little hamlet at the foot of the mountains, where lived some peasants and hunters, having ridden over fifty miles from the great city. The poor people here knew him well, and he was treated with much respect.

In the evening, after wine had been drank and supper eaten, an old hunter named Bal, who had ranged over the mountains many years in search of game, made a movement as though he would speak with the satrap.

"What is it?" asked Rustem, who noticed the movement.

"I wish to tell your excellency of a most curious animal that dwells among the mountains."

"Ah," uttered Rustem, who was ever on hand for anything curious or wonderful, "go on and tell me, good Bal."

"It is a most curious animal, sir, and such an one as I never saw before. I first saw it about three weeks ago, and several times have I seen it since; but I cannot get near it. Once I was near enough to throw my javelin. I threw it with all my might, and the animal caught it in his paws and broke it in pieces. Then he commenced to hurl great rocks at me, and I was forced to retreat."

"But how does this animal look?" asked Rustem, who had become much interested.

"Why, he looks something like a huge monkey. He runs sometimes on all fours, but he runs the fastest when erect. But the most curious thing is that he is always with a flock of wild goats, and he seems bent on protecting these goats in preference to himself."

"It must be some afrite or some ghoul," said Rustem.

"So I have thought," said the old hunter, with an involuntary shudder.

"And yet I must find him," resumed the satrap. "You shall go with me to-morrow, Bal, and we will surround and capture the thing."

This was agreed to, and at an early hour the party retired. All night did Rustem either dream, or lie awake and think, of the strange animal of which he had heard. From Bal's description he thought it might be some wicked afrite or genie who thus wandered among the mountains; and he debated much within himself whether it would be safe to attack such a power. But he had said that he would hunt for it, and he wished not his followers to think him cowardly; and besides, his curiosity was wonderfully excited, and he wished to satisfy it.

In the morning the satrap was ready betimes, and at an early hour his party set out, accompanied by Bal. Shortly they began to ascend the mountain, and though the way was rugged and dubious, yet Bal led them up surely. When they reached the top of the first mountain, they saw a vale ahead of them in which the grass grew luxuriantly, and which was wooded mostly with the tree of the pistachio nut. In this vale Bal said he first saw the strange animal, and so the party descended into it, but nothing was to be found save some birds and small animals. Rustem brought down two large birds

with his arrows, and then kept on. Bal now led them over the top of another mountain, and from thence through a long, rugged, winding ravine, and not until near noon did they reach another vale where vegetation was plenty. But when they reached this second vale, they found it not only more extensive than the first, but far more beautiful. It was a sort of basin of rich soil amid the surrounding mountains of rock, and it was seldom visited by man, on account of the rugged way that led to it, and from the fact that very few knew the only path by which it could be reached.

After viewing the beautiful place for some minutes, the party began slowly to descend towards it. They saw many wild goats frisking about among the trees, and just as they reached the edge of the place they started up a wild boar. Rustem saw the huge animal start, and with a shout to his followers, he set forward upon the chase. Away went the boar, and away went the satrap, and behind him came the score of men, eager for the sport. The boar ran a long distance among bushes and rank-weeds, and all heedless of scratches and rending garments, Rustem followed on. At length they came to an open space, and when the boar was half way across, the satrap let fly a javelin; the weapon struck the monster just behind the shoulder, and he turned. He rolled over upon the grass, and this served to drive the javelin further into his flesh. Rustem had watched his movements, and as soon as he rolled over upon the ground, the noble hunter sprang from his horse, and running quickly up, he gave the animal a blow upon the forehead with his axe that stunned him. After this the brute was easily despatched. Rustem was now all elate and eager. He was fired with enthusiasm, and was ready to attack anything that should present itself. As soon as the boar was dead, the satrap re-mounted his horse, and at that moment a shout from Bal arrested him.

"There, there!" cried the old hunter, rushing towards the noble, and at the same time pointing off towards a point where a herd of goats were huddled together.

Rustem looked, and he saw in the midst of the goats the animal of which Bal had spoken. He at first approached it carefully, and found it to be standing upright. Its head was covered with a thick mass of black hair, which hung like the mane of a buffalo or lion. The body was of a curious shape, and of a green color, seeming to be covered with scales. As soon as Rustem

had satisfied himself with gazing upon the strange nondescript, he gave the word for the chase; but he was careful to order his followers not to wound him in any way, unless it should become absolutely necessary in self-defence, as he wished to capture the thing if possible.

"By the spirit of Ahriman," he cried, "I never dreamed of such a monster. It is neither a man, a beast, nor a bird; nor is it a dragon, for it has no tail of such. See those green scales, how they glisten in the sunlight. If it is a demon, I will give it chase, and surely the name of the one mighty God will be proof against his power."

As he thus spoke, he set forward, and his party followed on after him. The nondescript watched his coming a few minutes, and then sprang into the bushes and disappeared, most of the goats following after him. Rustem urged his horse on, and when he had cleared the clump of bushes, he saw the strange animal just bounding away towards the rocks at the edge of the wood. Away he went, his horse now thoroughly excited with the idea of the chase, and soon he found himself flying along a rocky ravine, with the nondescript only a short distance ahead. Further on, Rustem saw a cliff which rose directly across the ravine, and he thought he should surely secure the animal there; but he was mistaken, for when it reached the cliff it sprang up the ragged side of the rock with incredible agility, and in a moment more would have disappeared. The satrap was now beside himself with excitement. He saw that he should not be able to make his way over the cliff which the nondescript had mounted with so much agility, except with much time and labor, and if another moment were lost he should lose his prey. So in the frenzy of the moment he snatched a javelin and hurled it with all his might. The strange being saw the movement, and he caught the weapon as it went whizzing by him, and broke it in pieces. Some of the others, seeing the movement of their master, hurled their javelins. The nondescript saw them coming, but he could not dodge them all; one of them struck him in the thigh, and he set up a howl of rage that made the very rocks shake, and then disappeared over the cliff.

Rustem would have dashed on and climbed the cliff, but Bal told him that by riding back a short distance he might go around it. He did so, and having gone back to the point at which he entered the ravine, he took another path around the side of the mountain, and ere long

he came to an extensive table of loose stones, and at a short distance he saw the afrite sitting, trying to pull the javelin from his flesh. He tried to run when he saw his enemies, but pain and loss of blood had weakened him, and he was soon caught. He did not struggle at all when he was seized, but with an imploring look into the face of the satrap, he pointed to the vengeful javelin, and then he folded his arms across his breast.

Rustem and his followers were now more astonished than before. They found that what they had taken for green scales was nothing more nor less than a garment very curiously made of leaves, and having removed a part of these so as to get at the wound of the javelin, they found that the skin beneath was nearly as white as their own. In short, they discovered that their prize was in truth a human being, or at any rate, so very near one that there was no external sign by which to detect the difference. Among the noble's followers was one who understood the secrets of the surgical art, and he extracted the barbed head of the javelin without much cutting or trouble. The wound was found to be only in the flesh, and after it had been carefully bandaged, Rustem advanced once more and spoke with the strange being, but he got no answer. The wild youth—for such he really was—threw the long, tangled black hair away from his face, and gazed with wonder into the countenances of those about him, but he made no answer to any of the questions that were asked of him: and yet his face did not seem all a blank—he did not appear like one who had no idea of the nature of what he saw and heard, but rather like one who was sorely puzzled. The satrap was a man well versed in language, and he spoke in all he could remember, but the youth understood none of them—only when the pure Persian was spoken, he manifested an interest that did not appear when he heard others. Rustem then approached and lifted him to his feet, at the same time making signs that no harm was intended.

Now that the mystic being stood erect, his form and features could be more plainly seen. He had a noble frame—tall and stout, with limbs of perfect symmetry, and rounded and turned at every point, and a face eminently handsome, notwithstanding the bronzed hue which exposure had given it. He could not have been more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, for the beard had not yet begun to grow upon his face, though

in his physical frame he had all the developments of maturer years. After trying in vain to get some spoken word from him, Rustem ordered him to be put upon a horse, and as soon as he was well secured the party returned. They reached the hunter's hut just after the sun had set, and there they encamped for the night.

In the evening Rustem went into the room where he had had the wild man confined, and found him lying down, but he rose to a sitting posture as soon as he saw his captor, and in his look and movement he displayed a perfect subjection, though, as it afterwards appeared, it was the strange fear of the wounds he had received that made him so. He seemed to have an instinctive knowledge that such a loss of blood could cause death, and he really had an instinctive feeling that his captors could save him from the dread fate. The satrap talked with him again, but he did not understand. He uttered a sound, but it was a wild, thrilling, sonorous sound, unlike anything save the low bellowing of the buffalo.

The wound was dressed again, and in the morning it was attended to once more, and by this time it was found to be doing well. In truth, the blood and flesh of the sufferer were so pure, so free from disease of any kind, that such a flesh wound, though quite deep, healed rapidly.

As soon as breakfast was eaten, Rustem set out upon his return to the city, for he considered that he gained prize enough for one day. On the way, he pondered upon the subject of the strange game he had captured, and he had at length resolved that he would keep the wild youth and see if he could not educate him. No sooner was this plan formed than he called his followers about him and made them swear that they would not speak of what had happened to any one, for he wished no one to know that he had such a being within his place: first, because he wished to make his experiments unencumbered by the advices and needless assistance of those who would surely offer themselves if they knew of the circumstances; and second, because he thought the youth himself would be more tractable if he were not bothered by visitors.

It was after dark when Rustem entered the city, and he reached his own house without exposing his prize. His followers were faithful, and he feared not for them, so he was sure he should have everything as he could wish; and he promised himself much pleasure in the culture of the strange mind he had found.

CHAPTER II.

THE LION HEART.

For a while Rustem found the task he had undertaken a difficult one; but he did not give it up. When he had caused his strange protegee to be clothed in the common garb, he found him to be not only comely in appearance, but extremely beautiful. The satrap was delighted with this, and he at once called his charge *Feridoon*, which signifies *The Lion Heart*. He gave him this name because he was as bold and strong as a lion, and because he exhibited traits of nobleness and daring with which the king of beasts is supposed to be endowed.

Rustem furnished seven stout men to take charge of his adopted son, and two most excellent masters were appointed to instruct him. For several months much difficulty was experienced in keeping a physical control over the youth, for the seven stout men were but as infants in his hands when he became enraged; but on such occasions the presence of his master would instantly restore him to composure.

Feridoon could not have been lost when a mere suckling, for he showed some signs that plainly evinced a faint memory of the sound of language, and at first, when his guardians were conversing, he would watch them with deep interest. He was first taught to pronounce simple words, and then sentences, and at the end of a year he could speak very plainly, and read the

more simple tales of the language. By this time his temper, too, had become subdued, and he was reasonable in all his demands, and would also listen to reason.

Thus passed away five years, and, strange as it may seem, Rustem had kept his secret most safely. Those whom he had trusted had not betrayed him, and none in the city, save one or two old scholars and his own household, knew that he had a youth of adoption beneath his roof. Even his own wives did not know it. They knew that he had some one confined in the further apartment of the great palace, but they knew not who it was.

And during these five years Feridoon had become a finished, polished scholar. All that time his teachers had labored with him to teach him the arts and secrets of science and literature, and from the very first he had evinced a warm desire to learn. As soon as he had become able to read and speak, there seemed to be no end to his thirst for knowledge. The most knotty points of politics he seized and dwelt upon, and he would not let them go until he had solved them to his heart's content. As the fifth year drew to a close, Feridoon began to discuss with his teachers, and they found, to their surprise, that they had raised up a mind more mighty than their own. The secret was, they had found a

soul and mind of God's own forming, and all they could do was to give it the field in which to work. At this time the old teachers approached the more direct points of government, and they found that their scholar met them in their arguments. They found that his mind had already grasped these points in advance. They explained to him the rights of kings and the duty of subjects, but Feridoon stopped them in the midst of their disquisition, and told them they must be wrong.

"Surely," said he, in a tone of sweetness and candor, but yet with much power and energy, "after what you have told me of the principles of humanity, of religion, of social rights, and of political power, you will not tell me that one man can hold the governing power over all others, unless all those others wish it."

"But some one must govern," answered the tutors, "and let it be whom it may, others will find fault."

"Not if his government be just and equitable," answered Feridoon. "If he shows that the whole energies of his soul are given for the good of his people, then of course none who are fit to be governed can find fault. Those who would murmur at such rule would be themselves the oppressors, and should be dealt with accordingly. Surely there can be no true government without the consent of the governed, for if such a government could exist, it would show the power of Might over Right."

It was in this way that Feridoon finished his education, and at every point where he differed from his tutors, he was sure to carry the day.

But the youth's education was not yet complete. One dark night Rustem called six of his most trusty guards, and with them he set off into the country, taking Feridoon with him. He stopped upon a beautiful oasis in the midst of the great desert to the northeast of the city, and there he finished the youth's instruction in the use of arms. Feridoon had already received instruction in the use of the sword and dagger, but now he was cased in heavy armor, and mounted upon a fiery steed, and taught to make use of the lance and battle-axe. A stout lance was given him, and he was directed to run it against a certain point in a distant tree upon a full gallop. He performed the feat the first time, and ere long he convinced his guardian that no more instruction could be given him in the use of arms, for he exhibited a rapidity of movement, a quickness of motion, a clearness of per-

ception, and an unfailing sight, that they had never seen equalled. In physical strength, he was a literal giant. When he was taken from the wild mountains, his physical powers had become fully developed, and even then he possessed all the brute force of the lion, but now he was stronger still.

The youth was taken back to the city by night, and once more he found himself in his own rooms at the satrap's palace.

On the morning that ushered in the sixth year of Feridoon's liberation from the wilderness, Rustem went in alone to see him. He was now twenty years old at least, and probably more than that. At any rate the satrap called him one-and-twenty. He arose as his master entered, and saluted him with becoming obeisance. Rustem gazed upon his charge in admiration; and well he might, for surely a more comely youth did not exist. He was now tall and well-formed, with every physical point of beauty fully developed, and his carriage was as easy and graceful as that of the most assiduous courtier. His features were not only perfect in form and regularity, but in their combination they presented a beauty such as Rustem had never seen elsewhere. His hair was black as night, and hung in glossy curls all around his neck and shoulders; and his eyes, which were also black, sparkled and burned like the evening stars.

Rustem was happy, for he had now a son. Surely, he had a right to claim Feridoon as his own, for he had not only reared him to full manhood, but he had done more; he had done more than give him life even—he had snatched him from a state of savageness and wildness—he had taken him from the literal state of the brutes, and made him a man. So Rustem had made all his servants, who were in the secret, swear that they would always call Feridoon his own child; and when asked concerning him, they would repeat the story he should give them. And that story was this. Said Rustem:

"After many prayers and sacrifices unto God, the dearest wish of my soul was granted. One of the spirits of Ormuzd appeared to me in a dream, and told me that my wife Sarah should bear me a son, and that I should call his name Feridoon, for he should be of a lion heart. And because of his lion heart I should keep him from the world till he should have fulfilled the full period of manhood. And my wife Sarah did bear me a son, and I called his name Feridoon, and I kept him away from the world. But the mother

of the child died, and the infant was reared upon the milk of goats, and he waxed strong in body and strong in mind. So I kept him apart from all others of his kind, save those who should teach him; and even the fact of his birth I kept hid. But now the period of his manhood is come, and he goes forth to the world. So shall ye speak to all who may ask of you concerning Feridoon."

And they swore that so they would speak, and even the youth himself, out of his great gratitude and love, gave promise to the same.

After Rustem had gazed with delight upon his son for a long while, he thought he would question him upon the point of his memory of childhood. He had never yet asked of that, because he feared he might call up some memories in the youth's mind that would clash with his own hopes and designs.

"My son," he said, taking a seat by the side of the youth, "I wish to ask you concerning your early childhood."

"Do you not already know that?" returned Feridoon, smiling.

"Not of your earliest childhood. I would know if you can remember anything of your parents."

The youth gazed into the old man's face for some moments, and then he bowed his head. He pondered a long while upon the subject thus presented, and finally he said:

"I suppose you may now be my parent, but yet my mind sees nothing of you beyond the time when you gave me chase in the mountain. I remember that, and I remember far back of that; but had you never found me, I should have always looked upon a certain old goat as my parent. You will remember that I had no knowledge then of humanity, or of races, save that I knew I was not a boar nor a bird, but I think I did really think myself a goat, though of different formation. You must not laugh at the absurdity of what I say, for then this great soul, this wonderful source of knowledge, had not been felt by me, and I only felt the instinct which governs the brutes."

"Of course you could only feel that," answered Rustem; "and so far from laughing am I, that I feel deeply interested in what you say. Can you remember your first impressions? What I would know is, how far back your memory can run."

Again Feridoon thought deeply, and at length he said:

"Away back in the distant years of life, when I was small and weak, I can see a deep cave in the rocks, and there I lived among a flock of goats. I well remember the goat from which I received my milk, and I remember, too, of finding sweet fruits which I ate. From that time I waxed large and strong, so that at length I protected my goats often from their enemies. Once I remember of killing a monstrous boar that attacked us. I sprang upon him with a club, and killed him as easily as I could now kill one of your warriors."

"And back of that; can your memory see nothing else—nothing of the human face and voice?"

"Ah!" uttered the youth, while a sudden beam of light shot athwart his handsome face, "I remember how my heart thrilled when first I saw your face, and heard your voice. It was that alone which made me so submissive to your will. I was entranced by your speech, for it awoke in my soul a set of feelings which, as I can now see, must have sprung from some recollections which still clung faintly to my mind. But I could never explain them, never analyze them, though of course I can now see that they must have come from the memory of scenes, and faces, and speeches, which I had heard and seen before. Then, too, I sometimes think I can see a dim, flickering picture of blood and strife—of flashing steel and sharp cries, and of loud curses—but I have no form or feature to the scene."

After conversing a while longer upon the same subject, Rustem became convinced that Feridoon was two or three years old, at least, when he was lost, and in all probability his father had been a merchant, and had been murdered and robbed upon the desert. Nothing else seemed so reasonable as this, and upon it he rested his thoughts of Feridoon's origin. That Feridoon was a Persian he knew, and from his form and features, he believed him to be a native of Persepolis.

"And now," said the youth, "I am to see your females; I am to mix in your society of men and women, and find good and evil. Do you think people will love me?"

"Most surely they will."

"And will the females love me?"

"Ay," answered Rustem, with enthusiasm. "They will fall down at thy feet, even as the worshipper sinks down before the morning's sun."

Among all our people there is not another so comely as thou art."

Feridoon blushed, and after a while, he said :

"And may I not find among the females of our city some kind heart and noble soul with which I can mate?"

"What know you of such things?" asked the satrap. "You have never seen a woman's face."

"O, I have, my father."

"Have! When?"

"When I have slept."

"You have dreamed, then?"

"Perhaps so. But I have seen some most lovely forms. And I have been taught, too, of the love of woman. In many of the tales that I have read, woman stands out as the very type of that true love which my soul feels is the most sacred and pure. In nearly all the manuscripts I have read, the writers have striven to make woman seem an angel. Is it so?"

"Sometimes it is, but often it is not," returned Rustem, somewhat puzzled by his protege's manner and thoughts. "But let not your thoughts turn upon that point. Seek first to read the truth of humanity as you shall find it spread out about you, and then you may go on and seek such companions as you like, after your judgment has become experienced."

Much more conversation was held, and when Rustem left his protege, it was decided that on the following day he should be taken to the court of the king, and introduced to the nobles and courtiers. This pleased Feridoon much, and he was grateful for the favor thus extended. He supposed he was now to be introduced into the midst of those who would show him all the virtues and beauties of social life, and the truth and justice of moral government. Alas! how sadly was he deceived.

CHAPTER III.

THE ASTROLOGER.

THE secret of Feridoon's strict obedience to the wishes of Rustem had been gratitude. As soon as he became conscious of his advancing knowledge and consequent happiness, his whole soul was not only given to the work, but it was also turned in thankfulness upon his benefactor. He had not submitted to his close confinement because he deemed that any one had a right to keep him there, but because he was willing to sacrifice his personal liberty for the knowledge he was receiving. No one had ever yet aroused him to anger, and consequently no one had witnessed the effects of his wrath. All that he had manifested had been the natural kindness and nobleness of his soul; and though in the course of his martial and manual studies he had evinced surprising degrees of strength, yet not one of those who knew him even dreamed of the mighty physical power that lay at rest within the muscles and sinews of his comely frame.

The apartments he had occupied were six in number, and among them was a large artificial garden, that had been constructed especially for his use. From these apartments he could at any time have easily made his way had he been so disposed; but he had no desire so to do, for he knew that his guardian wished him not to.

On the following morning Feridoon was arrayed in a garb of rich and costly fabric, and in

company with his father, he went to the court of the king. On the way he found much to attract his attention, and several times he stopped his horse to gaze upon the various objects of wonder that met his sight. And people looked at him, too.

"Surely," said one, "that must be the son of some powerful king whom the satrap has received from abroad."

"Nay," said another, "it must be some real king, for see how nobly he rides, and with what majesty he holds his head. Most surely, one who has been ruled all his days would not ride like that."

"Upon my faith you are all wrong," spoke a merchant, who happened to be passing. "That is no less than Rustem's son, for I heard yesterday that he had a son whom he had kept secluded for one-and-twenty years."

Upon this, the people pressed after the youth and gazed wonderingly upon him, and soon their murmurs broke forth into shouts of applause. At length Feridoon became aware that he was the object of all this commotion, and he raised his hat and bowed to the crowd. Then he rode more closely to his father's side and asked him for his purse. The satrap gave it up without asking a question, and as soon as Feridoon received it he commenced to scatter pieces

of gold among the crowd. He had read in old manuscripts that benevolent princes had done so, and as he saw much poverty about him, he wished to do the same. This raised the admiration of the people to the highest pitch, and it well pleased the satrap, for he loved to see his assumed son thus honored.

In due time they reached the royal palace, and Feridoon was introduced to the king. He had been instructed how to behave, and as soon as he found himself in the royal presence, he fell on his knees and bowed his head.

This king's name was Sohrab. He was now past the meridian of life, and his countenance gave signs of a jealous, bitter spirit, and his whole form and feature gave token of a riotous and sensual indulgence and excess. He had formerly been a powerful general under Kei Khosrou, the former king. In an excursion against the insurgent Khorasons, Kei Khosrou was taken sick, and in that state he was brought back to die. Feridoon had heard the story from his father, and he knew how Sohrab came on the throne. He had heard how the old king was taken sick and crazy, and how he was brought back to Persepolis to die. After he was dead, his body was laid in the great hall of the capitol, all exposed to view, and all the people of the kingdom came to look on those noble features in death, and to pray for a successor as good and just as he had been. At the end of a week, the body of the dead king was embalmed and laid away in the royal sepulchre, and then Sohrab proclaimed himself king. The soldiers sustained him, for he made them promises of great honors, and as Kei Khosrou had left no child behind him, the people submitted to Sohrab's rule.

All this Feridoon had heard, and in his soul he felt that the man before him was not a true king—that he did not stand as a true representative of the interests of the people. But when he came to look into the king's face, he was sorely distressed, for he saw there the marks of a wicked man, and his proud soul shrank from bowing to such a man. But the king was delighted with Feridoon, and he heaped on him the most fulsome flattery, and also did he flatter Rustem for having raised up such a son.

"By my royal head," he cried, after he had gazed well upon the youth, "you should be ever near our person. Some of my best warriors shall learn you to bear arms, and in time your sinews may become strong and tough. How

would it suit you to live here in this our royal palace?"

"For the present, O king, I would live with my father," returned the youth.

"So be it, then; only let me have the light of thy countenance often."

After much such talk, Rustem and his son withdrew and proceeded on their way home. Feridoon gave full scope to his feelings, and failed not to speak his thought of the king. The satrap chided him for his speech, and expressed sorrow for his opinions.

"For," said he, "Sohrab is our king, and as such, we must love and honor him. He has been a great friend to me, and not for half my wealth would I have you incur his displeasure. He is revengeful, too, and would surely put you to death if he heard that you spoke against him."

"Put me to death for merely speaking!" uttered Feridoon in surprise.

"Ay, most surely."

"But his people would object."

"Ah, my son, he is the people. They move only through him. His will is their law."

The youth pondered awhile, and then he said:

"I will be as careful as I can; but the king had better not lift a hand against me, for I should surely smite him."

The satrap said no more, for he knew that his son was governed by just thoughts, and it was beyond his power to combat them. And then he was thus led to view himself in rather an unfavorable light, for he had himself had some hand in elevating Sohrab to the throne. In view of receiving the office of satrap of Persepolis, he had given all his influence for that man.

When they reached their dwelling, they found an old man sitting in the hall. Even the satrap was inspired with much reverence by the stranger's venerable looks, and Feridoon bowed with pure esteem and respect. This stranger was an old man, past the bound of threescore and ten, of a tall, commanding form, but somewhat bent beneath the weight of years. His hair and beard were white as snow, and long and flowing. His face was kind and generous in its expression, and a natural mildness softened every feature. His dress was a robe of blue cloth, confined at the loins by a girdle of silk. He wore heavy sandals upon his feet, and upon his head was a hat of curious shape. His blue robe was worked with curious devices in figures of gold, and his girdle was worked the same.

"Whom have we here?" asked Rustem, after he had bowed to the old man.

"My name is Kobad," returned the stranger.

"Ha!" uttered Rustem, seeming a little startled at first, "the profound astrologer of Arabia?"

"Ay—once of Arabia—but now of Persia," returned the old man.

Both the satrap and his son were considerably moved by this announcement, though through different emotions. Rustem was moved by a natural superstitious idea of the astrologer's power, mingled with some dread; while Feridoon was moved alone by the superior knowledge that he had heard attributed to the wonderful man. He had heard that Kobad not only read great truths from the stars, but that he made them subserve his own purposes by having learned to count their changes and foretell their conjunctions and appearances. And then his teachers, or one of them, had told him that the astrologer was the most deeply versed in human nature, in the laws of right and wrong, and in the various occult sciences, of any man with whom he had ever conversed. All this made the youth look upon the old man with more than ordinary reverence, and he failed not to show his feelings in his glowing looks.

"You are the satrap Rustem?" said Kobad, after he had looked awhile on the youth and then turned to the officer.

"I am, sir."

"And this youth—who is he?"

"My son," replied Rustem, with some hesitation.

"The child of your own flesh and blood?"

"I so look upon him," answered the satrap, after another hesitation.

"It matters not how you look upon him," returned the astrologer, rather sternly; "every man should know the child of his own loins. Is this youth such to you?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I would see if you think to deceive me. However, let that pass. I blame you not for wishing to pass so noble a youth off as your own; but nothing within the range of human destiny is hidden from me."

"Then you know all?" uttered Rustem, tremulously.

"All that I wish to know. There be many things I wish not to know, so I seek them not. All that you know about the childhood of Feridoon, I know. If I knew more, you would not

rest until I had told it to you, so I choose not to delve it out from the bank of mystery that now holds it in burial. But I have come to see the youth himself, and I have that to tell him that may be of lasting good to him."

"Then," said Feridoon, his eyes sparkling with pleasure, "I pray you come at once to my apartments, for I shall hold it a joy to converse with one so learned."

"And do you think to learn my mystic science?" asked the astrologer, gazing sharply into the young man's face.

"I wish to learn nothing that is by right your secret—only what is proper for me to know would I learn."

This answer pleased Kobad greatly, and he embraced the youth with enthusiasm. After this the satrap gave his consent for his son and the astrologer to retire together, and he did it the more readily because he believed that he should learn from the former all that transpired; but he would not have dared to refuse under any circumstance, seeing that the secret was only in the strange man's hands, but that he knew much more of the youth, or might do so, than he did himself.

Feridoon led the way to his own apartments, and when he came to the stairs he assisted his aged companion to ascend. When they had finally reached their destination, the youth seated the sage upon a soft lounge and then drew up a cushion and seated himself at his feet.

Upon this the old man commenced to ask questions, and Feridoon answered them readily and promptly. All the branches of learning of the times were gone through with, and our hero proved himself to be master of them all.

"My son," said the old man, after he had gone through with all such branches as were available to the best scholars of the times, even to the science of government, "I find you a very wonder in learning, and it is no very difficult thing to predict for you a brilliant and useful future. I know you have bravery equal to your intellect."

"I fear nothing, save evil from my own soul," was the youth's response.

"Good, my son. And one with such a frame should have some strength too; for we live in times when even the most pure in soul, and the most gigantic in intellect, must sometimes overcome mere brute force. Do you think that age will give you the physical strength to do that?"

Feridoon smiled. At that instant a black

slave, of huge stature passed through the garden. He was one of Feridoon's own attendants, and the youth called him up. The black soon stood in the presence of his master, a giant in bulk, and with muscles like young yew trees.

"Fear not," my faithful fellow," said Feridoon, as he arose, "I am not going to hurt you."

As he spoke, he placed his right hand upon the stout leathern girdle that confined the slave's shirt, and the left hand he placed beneath the fellow's thigh; then, with a quick movement, he raised the bulky body of the huge black from the floor, and lifting it high above his head, he gave it one mighty swing, and hurled it to the centre of the small lake that had been dug in the centre of the garden, the great glass doors being open, and the way all clear. The youth saw the slave crawl out from the troubled water unhurt, and then went and sat down again at the old man's feet.

For a while Kobad could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses. He gazed first upon the slave while he floundered in the lakelet, and then he gazed upon the youth. It was true, for he had seen it, and as soon as he seemed to be sure that his eyes had not deceived him, he embraced the youth, and in a fervent tone, he uttered:

"Surely God has raised thee up for some noble and glorious purpose. Now I will tell thee what thou shalt do, and be assured that I speak for thy good. To-morrow morning, as soon as thou hast partaken of thy morning's meal, go out and find the house of Zak Turan, the cobbler. Go down this street till you come to the great fountain of the lion; there turn to the left, and ere long you will find yourself face to face with the brazen statue of Zal. To the right hand there you will see a narrow street running towards the sepulchre of Paishdadains; half way down this street, upon the left hand, you will see a cobbler's stall, and within you will find an old man at work. He is a good man,

and will be friendly. Tell him you wish to rest, and if he offers you a seat in his stall, tell him that I sent you to him. I would not have sent thee upon this mission, but I have proved thee to be all that a youth can be in knowledge and truth, and I fear not to trust thee."

"But you know not of my more deep-set characteristics," said Feridoon; "those evils or virtues that underlie all manhood, and make it in the end either good or bad."

"Yes, I do," returned the astrologer. "I have seen and conversed with one of your tutors, and he has told me all your points of character. Yet I could not believe in your knowledge till I had tried you myself."

"And do you find me with an education befitting one of my age?"

"Ay—well, well—past my most sanguine hopes."

"But what hopes can you have?"

"Hopes of finding in all Persia one man who is fit for the business Heaven has in hand. But I have not time now to waste. Go to-morrow morning as I have explained, and you shall not regret it."

"But surely I may have some reason for going?"

"Only that it is my wish, and for your good. You should ask no more."

"But have you no more directions—no more advice?"

"Not now. Go as I have directed, and your own judgment will dictate the rest."

Feridoon was sorely puzzled, but he asked no more questions. That the astrologer was honest and true, he could not doubt, for the fact was written in every line of those mild, time-worn features. As Kobad spoke, he arose from his seat and turned away from the apartment. Feridoon conducted him to the street, and when there the youth asked:

"When shall we meet again?"

"When there is need."

And with this he was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

ZILLAH.

WHEN Feridoon returned to his room he was beside himself with puzzling conjectures. While the astrologer had been with him he had been so taken up with the majestic presence of the man that he had had no time to indulge in the natural inquiries which such a presence would be likely to bring up; but now that he was alone, all these thoughts came rushing upon him. His mind dwelt upon three points: first, what could give cause for the interest of such a man as the Arabian astrologer in his behalf? second, why was this interest?—that is, what particular purpose was there in it? third, what could possibly be the intent of his seeking out the old cobbler? But in the midst of all this mass of strangeness Feridoon had no doubts of the old astrologer's honesty of purpose. His soul rather swelled beneath it, for he imagined that he could trace out in all some reliance that was to be placed upon himself.

While the youth thus pondered with himself his guardian entered the apartment, and after speaking of other topics as a sort of prelude, he asked what had been the business of the astrologer. At first the youth hesitated, but not with doubt. He was merely collecting his thoughts, and when he had remembered how the astrologer had commenced his questions he went on and

gave Rustem a clear account of the whole conversation, only omitting what had been said concerning the cobbler. That part of the business he had resolved to keep to himself, not from any desire to deceive, but simply because there promised to be a bit of romance in the affair, and he chose to go into it alone and free from overlooking and espionage. The satrap was much puzzled with Kobad's intent, but he contented himself with thinking that he only meant to instruct the youth if he should need it.

"Did he not ask you anything concerning your childhood?" asked Rustem, uneasily.

"Not a word."

"Strange—very strange. I suppose he only means to give to you instruction if you need it. And yet I cannot see into even that," said Rustem, thoughtfully.

Nor did Feridoon see into it, but he had some ideas which he did not speak—ideas which might have made Rustem uneasy. He had seen enough of existing things in one day to assure him that there was need of reform, and might not Kobad have some ideas of such a work? and might not he want a young man to help him? At any rate, such thoughts floated dimly through the youth's brain, but of course they were as shapeless as the mists of morning.

After nearly two hours spent in conversation, the satrap withdrew, and shortly afterwards four of Feridoon's black slaves came into his apartment.

"What is it?" asked the youth, as they stood gazing upon him.

But they did not speak.

"What do you wish?" repeated their master.

"You will pardon us, but Clao says you threw him from this window clear to the middle of yonder lake. Did he not lie to us?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because we four have staked a daric of gold against the fourth part of a daric from him that you did not do it."

"Do you think Clao would lie for the sake of praising me?"

"We feared so."

"You shall see."

As Feridoon spoke, he sprang from his seat and caught the heaviest of the four slaves by the girdle and the thigh, and with apparent ease hurled him to the very verge of the further side of the lake.

"Now what think you?" asked Feridoon, turning to the other three.

But they said nothing; they stood like beings petrified. At length, however, they fell upon their knees and bowed till their foreheads touched the floor. They had already learned to love their young master for his kindness and gentleness, but now they worshipped him. He had touched a place in their homely souls that held their deepest admiration. Henceforth the twelve slaves who attended upon him were to look upon him as nothing less than a god.

The youth dismissed his slaves, after having given them money enough to pay the stake they had lost through his means, and then set about his own affairs. He took a book of poems and sat down to read, and at a seasonable hour he retired.

In the morning he arose early and dressed himself, not gaudily, but well. His hair he separated and combed out until the flowing ringlets glistened like jet, and his skin glowed like the rose with the flush of pride and health. He stood before his polished mirror of silver, and as he gazed upon the picture of himself he saw beyond, he wondered if wickedness and evil would make him look like those youths whom he had seen in attendance upon the king. He had just completed his toilet when half a dozen of his slaves came up. They knew how kind he was,

and it seems they had resolved to seek permission to look at their young master's arms.

Feridoon laughed outright as they made their request, and unclasping the jewelled band that held his sleeve at the wrist, he stripped his arm bare to the shoulder. The slaves gathered around, and looked at it, and then they looked upon one another and shook their heads. They were anatomists enough to know that those long, swelling lines of muscles, and those huge, hard cords, contained the secret of the marvellous prowess they had seen. They saw that where their own big, brawny arms were flat or indented, his were rounded with muscles. They finished their examination and went away highly pleased with the new favor that had been granted them.

After breakfast Rustem came up to see if his son would attend him to court, but Feridoon told him he meant to take a stroll about the city. The satrap made no objections, only he urged the necessity of care and circumspection, and then left the youth to follow such course as he saw fit, not forgetting to repeat his injunctions at least three times, before he closed the door.

It was nine o'clock when Feridoon left his guardian's palace, and with a moderate step he took his way as the astrologer had directed. At the great fountain he stopped a while to view the crowds of people who were assembled about the place, and some of their remarks gave him more insight into the peculiar characteristics of the lower classes of the citizens than he had before learned from books or the sayings of others. When he came to the great brazen statue of Zal, he turned to the right, and before him he saw a long narrow street, at the extremity of which he could distinguish the abrupt, dark face of the sculptured rock. Down this street he turned, and ere long he heard the notes of a merry song. The words struck him as being peculiar, and he stopped to listen.

"Like the bird in its native forest, or like the roe upon the bleak mountain,
Where freedom from all care is his, and where joy cometh with each morning:
So live I among kings and princes, myself alone to fear,
and all to love.
They fear all things seen, and love nought but themselves.
Ho, ho, ho,—how much happier, then, am I than the great crowned ones of earth."

Feridoon approached the place from whence the sound proceeded, and he found a cobbler seated in his stall at work upon an old sandal. He was a short, stumpy fellow, with grizzled gray hair, a light gray eye, a round, laughing face, and not far from threescore years of age.

"What ho, here, master cobbler, you make the place merry with your music and your thoughts," uttered Feridoon, as he came up.

The old fellow looked up, and when he saw the young man's costly dress, and his kingly bearing, he seemed for a moment disconcerted, but he quickly regained his composure, and then he replied :

"I was only singing to pass away the time, sir."

"But your song was strange to me. If I might believe that, you are the happiest man in Persepolis."

"No, no. Happier than kings or princes, said I."

"And how so?"

"Because I have no vexing cares, upon my mind."

"But he that has the welfare of a great people upon his care, and labors well for them, even though all his life be marked with labor, yet he must be happy, for who can be happier than he who works for the good of all?"

"O, I grant ye that, young sir."

"Then is not our king happy?"

"It is not for me to say."

"But you have spoken in your song, and you said that you were happier than the king. Explain."

"Nay, sir. 'Tis sedition—'tis rank conspiracy to speak against the king."

"How so?"

"Because he punishes it as such."

"Of course he would punish the man who should dare to speak falsely of him; but surely he would not punish one for telling the truth; so let us hear thy answer. Come."

"Not so, master. Even should I tell the truth, and it were hard upon our king, he would make me taste the lash most freely."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Feridoon. "Why, you have answered me more plainly than I had hoped."

"But I have not answered thee against the king; no, I'll swear I have not."

"But you have, old father. You have said he would whip you for telling the truth. What more could you say against him?"

"But that is the truth."

"Ha, ha—and 'tis what I asked you. And now, soberly, if such is the king's character, then you must be happier than he."

"You are not a spy, sharp sir?" said the cobbler, with considerable fear.

"No, no. I am only walking for pleasure and instruction, and I stopped here, hearing your song, and liking its sentiment, hoping that I might rest a while beneath your roof."

"Most surely you shall. Here, upon this stool you may find a resting place, away from the sun and the dust."

"There?" cried Feridoon, looking upon the dust covered seat to which the jolly old fellow had pointed. "Why, the dust is already there, and the sun will dart in there like fire in half an hour. Good Kobad told me you had better rest."

"Kobad?" exclaimed the cobbler, dropping the sandal.

"Ay. Are you not Zak Turan?"

"Of a verity I am."

"Then to you it was that Kobad sent me."

"Now Ormuzd be my guide. Of course I knew thee not."

"And do you know me now?"

"Only that you are the offspring of Ormuzd,* and fit to enter where you please," continued the old man, rising from his seat and opening the door of his stall. "So come in here, and follow me."

Feridoon entered the stall, and when the door was closed, the cobbler opened the way to the dwelling, which was in the rear, the stall being only a sort of pen built out upon the street, and shielded by an awning of net work and straw. At first the youth found himself in a narrow, dark hall or passage, at the further end of which he saw a flight of stairs. Up these he was led, and after passing through several small rooms, which contained the meanest of furniture, his guide opened a door which led to an apartment of larger dimensions, and furnished well. The next apartment, however, was still more sumptuously furnished, and within it Feridoon found two females, one of them well advanced in years, and the other only a girl. This older female was Zak Turan's wife, and her name was Rudabah. She was taller than her husband, and though a good, kind woman, yet her will was law in the cobbler's dwelling.

"Rudabah," said Zak Turan; "this is the youth of whom Kobad spoke."

The wife immediately arose and bowed very low, and then, without a word, followed her husband from the apartment.

*The ancient Persians believed that next to God were two great spirits, that pervaded the universe and held influence over mankind. Ormuzd was the good spirit and Ahriman the evil.

Feridoon was much surprised at this movement, and he would have called the cobbler back had not his eyes at that instant rested on the face of the girl who was left with him. She had arisen now, and was standing with downcast eyes before the young man. Her form was round and full, with a medium height; her skin as fair as the pearl of Catifa, and the color of her cheeks blushing like the new-blown rose. Her hair was a dark brown, and shone with the lustre of gold, and her dark blue eyes were like the morning and evening stars. Like pearls themselves gleamed the pure white teeth that lay half hidden behind her ruby lips, and over all her face was thrown the charm of modesty and virtuous purity. For some moments Feridoon stood perfectly entranced, and his heart throbbed with a wild, thrilling emotion. In all the tales he had read he had not conceived of beauty like this, and on the instant was his heart enchained.

"Lady," he said, as soon as he could command his speech, "I know not why we have thus met, or whether it was intended that this meeting should take place. I was bidden by Kobad, the astrologer, to come hither, and I obliged him. Further than that he told me not."

The youth's voice was as sweet as the murmur of the evening zephyr, and the maiden listened with rapture. She returned his glances, and the rose upon her cheek deepened, and her swelling bosom heaved with the emotions her heart had caught. She spoke, and her voice was like the soft, sweet notes of the lute, or like the tones of angels when they visit us in our dreams.

"To me, also, did the astrologer speak, and he warned me of your coming. He told me to receive you and entertain you, and to fear no evil in your presence. He gave me no reason, nor did he state another wish."

"Then," said Feridoon, drawing nearer, "our fates may run together. Perhaps Kobad has looked into the future and seen that our destinies commingle, and thus would he bring us together that we may know each other."

The youth raised the maiden's hand to his lips and kissed it, and then he led her to a seat and reclined beside her. But she answered him not yet.

"May I know, lady, how you are called by those who bear you company?"

"My name is Zillah."

"And mine is Feridoon."

"The son of the satrap Rustem?" asked Zillah, quickly.

"Yes—I am so called. And you—whose child?"

"Zak Turan is my father."

"Blessed by thee must be the parent who bare thee, and blessed am I in the pleasure of knowing thee. Thou art as a sun just arisen upon my way, or like a full moon come to illumine the night of my life. I would know thee fully, thy mind, thy soul, thy thoughts and thy wishes."

"My mind," answered Zillah, with a smile, "is as a man seeking after riches with which to bless himself and those dependent upon him. My soul is like unto the chest within which that man shall put those nobler jewels that are of the most value. My thoughts are like the heavens—sometimes clouded with passing griefs, but with light and joy still resting there, like the sun and moon and stars, albeit the clouds are sometimes fitting before them. My wishes are like the sands of the desert—changing, as different winds sweep across them, but yet wandering not from their parent bosom."

If Feridoon was charmed when he beheld the outward beauties of the maiden, he was more charmed now, and her eyes drooped again when she saw how earnest and ardent was his gaze. But the silence lasted not long. The youth went on with the conversation, and he found that his companion excelled all that he had ever read of in woman. Her wit was as sharp as a sword, and yet as pure and gentle as a zephyr. Her thoughts were noble and sound, her ideas always to the point, and her knowledge bounded only by the reach of human ken.

"Surely," said Feridoon, at the end of the first hour, "your mind is a rich store-house of jewels and gold of thought."

"Nay, nay, Feridoon," she replied, with a sweet smile. "You must not flatter; for surely I have learned of thee, and from thy wondrous knowledge I know that I may learn much more. True, I have had a most profound teacher, for Kobad himself has taught me; but my discernment is not like yours. I am weaker in thought and not so powerful in logic."

"Then the astrologer has taught thee?"

"Yes; for the past four years he has been my tutor."

"And I must ask thee still another question," resumed Feridoon, gazing softly into the maiden's face. "Has thy heart rested in love upon any of my sex?"

"My father, surely, I love."

"Most truly. But any other?"

"And my good teacher."

"Ay, of course; but is there another?"

"An hour since I should have answered thee nay."

"And now?"

"I must confess that my heart has flown to thee."

"Blessed being," cried the youth, drawing Zillah upon his bosom, "you have found one who can love thee with his whole soul and life. Let our loves be known to God, and let our hearts know that in the love they give they have nothing lost. Surely Kobad would not have sent me hither but for this."

"I do not think the good astrologer would have been mistaken in his purpose," murmured Zillah. "When he first told me that he should send a youth to visit me, and bade me entertain him, I obeyed because it was my duty, but I could have wished that he had chosen a female for my companion. So I dreaded the coming of the youth—and yet I ought not so to have done, for I should have known that Kobad would have done nothing concerning me but for my good. Yet was I in dread of your coming, and when I saw my father enter, and I knew that the youth was following him, my heart was pained. I dared not look up till you spoke. But when I heard your voice, and when I saw your face, there was but one pang left. I wondered if you had ever known woman and loved."

"And I should have told you that until that moment my eyes had never rested upon the face of a female with whom I had spoken. Strange as it may seem to you, it is a truth that since infancy, you are the first female with whom I have spoken."

"Then joy is mine," murmured the beautiful girl, and as she spoke, she pillowed her head on her lover's bosom and embraced him without fear of harm. She was happy now, and Feridoon was happy as she.

The hours passed away, but they heeded not their flight. Noon passed, but they knew it not. The afternoon crept slowly on, and all the while the lovers sat buried in the thoughts and feelings that had so suddenly and strangely sprung into life in their bosoms. It was not until the light of day began to grow dim that Feridoon thought of his home. He started up and gazed out upon the distant horizon, and he knew that night was at hand.

"By my life," he uttered, "I dreamed not of this. See, Zillah, the day is gone!"

"The first day of our love," answered the maiden, with beaming eyes. "O, how blessed!"

"Ay," responded Feridoon, "it is doubly blessed, for it has not only given us joy, but it has opened to us more treasures of the mind than we had before possessed. O, it is our first day of love, but not our last. It is but the commencement of a long life of sweeter, holier love than our hearts have before conceived of. Is it not so?"

"Most truly," answered Zillah.

The lovers embraced once more, and when they had pledged their loves and asked God to bless them, the youth turned away.

"I shall come again soon," he said, ere he reached the door. "I cannot remain long away."

Zillah smiled as he spoke, and then Feridoon turned away. He went at once to the street by a shorter way than that by which he had come, and soon he was on his way towards his palace home.

CHAPTER V.

HOW SEVEN MEN PERFORMED A MISSION FOR THE KING.

For a long time after Feridoon had gone, did Zillah remain alone in her apartment. Her head was not turned nor were her thoughts now very wild or strange. Her love for the youth with whom she had just parted was already of that deep, fervent character which takes the whole soul into its own mould, and reason and judgment were both hers still. There was no mock modesty in those long gone ages among the pure ones—none of that assumed distance that marks the movement of those who would appear what they are not, but truth and virtue went hand in hand, and right was never hidden. If a certain act was just and right, it was enough.

When the darkness fairly settled down upon the great city, Zillah went down to the lower sitting-room, where the family usually spent their evenings, and there she found her father and mother. The latter asked her immediately what had passed between the youth and herself, and after a moment's reflection, she related the substance of what had been said, leaving out all those sweet sentences which only lovers can understand. When she had concluded, the old lady looked very solemn, and Zak Turan laughed outright, while Zillah blushed and hung down her head.

"I hope Kobad has been wise in this," said Rudabah, "for I should grieve most sorely should evil fall upon our child."

"Evil?" uttered the cobbler, with a merry twinkle of the eye. "How can evil come of true love?"

"Look upon me and see," quickly answered his wife. "See to what the love for you has brought me."

"That was not love. It was hate that made you marry me. You hated me, and so you became my wife to spite me. But God knows I bear up well under the affliction."

"And why should you not, seeing that you have such afflicted company? If you are afflicted, what am I? My life! what a thing I have for a husband."

"The merriest man in all Persepolis."

"The most foolish."

"In marrying you, I admit; but I have long since repented of that." And as Zak Turan thus spoke, he laughed so loud and long that they did not hear the rap which came upon the door.

"But tell me," said Zillah, "why the astrologer should have sent the youth hither?"

"I know not, unless it was that you might fall in love with each other," answered the cobbler.

"So it must have been," added the wife.

"But what does he mean by that?"

"We have no business to question his motives," returned Zak Turan. And then moving

nearer to his wife's side, he whispered so that the maiden could not hear, "We must not speak of this before Zillah."

For once Rudabah acknowledged the justice of her husband's remark, and just as she gave an affirmative nod of the head, they heard a loud knock upon the door. The cobbler hastened to open it, and when he had done so, three men entered. They seemed to be travellers, and their garments were very dusty.

"Good sir," spoke the eldest of the strangers, "we are travellers, and strangers in this great city. We saw your light shine through the chinks of your door, and hearing your loud laugh we thought there must be good cheer within."

"You are welcome to such as I have," returned Zak Turan: "but I fear me you will find my cheer anything but acceptable. I laugh because of my light heart and my angel wife—not from the quality of my wine."

Rudabah was still sitting by her husband's side, and in payment of the words he had just spoken, she pinched him severely upon the neck, so that he involuntarily cried out with pain; but he dared not resent it, for he knew that in a pitched battle he should come out second best. However, the affair passed off, and while his wife went to fetch the wine, the cobbler made a sign for his daughter to leave the room. Zillah accordingly arose and was proceeding towards the door, when one of the strangers called her back.

"Surely," said he, "you will not deprive us of the light of your dwelling?"

"If you allude to my child—"

"I allude to this lovely damsel who would flee from us," broke in the guest.

"She is not used to strangers," said Zak Turan, "and would be more easy in her own apartments, where she has work to do."

"I know not what may be your habits here," resumed the stranger, "but in my own land we deem it an insult for a female to retire from before visitors. Let her remain, I pray you, for thereby my pleasure will be much enhanced."

Now it had always been the custom of Zak Turan, since his daughter had grown up to womanhood, to have her withdraw before visitors entered, but now this had been prevented by the suddenness of their entrance. He had done this to protect his child from harm, for he knew she was very beautiful, and that many would wish to possess her charms. However, seeing

that his present guests were strangers, he supposed that no harm could ensue, so he bade Zillah be seated again.

"She is your own child, then?" said the spokesman of the travelling trio.

"She is," was the cobbler's answer.

"Surely God has blessed you."

"So I feel. But here is my wine. It is not the best, nor is it the worst. And here is bread and meat."

The strangers helped themselves to the wine and they praised it highly; and they did the same by the bread. But while they ate and drank, the one who had spoken so freely kept his eyes fixed upon Zillah nearly the whole of the time. She noticed it, and it made her feel uneasy. There was a strange power in the eye of the stranger that she could not define, but which yet filled her with dread. After a while the traveller moved away from the table and drew his seat nearer to the maiden and began to converse with her. He proved himself to be a man of much information, and he talked to her of foreign lands and foreign manners. Yet she could see that same light in his dark, gleaming eyes which she did not like. She had from the first felt a secret dread of the man, and all his fine talk could not banish it.

At length the strangers arose, and having thanked the host for his kindness, they departed. As soon as they were gone, Zillah told her father that she did not like the looks of them, and he admitted the truth of the impression, but apprehended no danger.

"Let the strangers pass," said Rudabah, "they may be as bad as man can be, and yet they would be gods compared with thee, thou hateful, abominable, wicked, spiteful, odious, repulsive, shocking, loathsome, disgusting afrite."

"Mercy on me, my dear wife, what can you mean?"

"Didn't you tell those men I was your angel wife?"

"Surely I did."

"And is not that enough?"

"No. I should have told them that you were doubly my angel—that you were heaven itself."

"And why didn't you?"

"Because you were present, and while your face was here to give the lie to any such remark, I thought it not worth while to make it. Upon my life, I doubt me if they believed what I did say in your favor."

Rudabah gave in this time, but well did the

cobbler know that he should have to pay dearly for his victory at some future time.

In the midst of this domestic squall, Zillah retired to her own apartment, and there she lay down to dream of the events of the day; for surely it had been an eventful day for her. Her heart had been opened for the first time with that pure and holy love which first burst upon Adam after his sleep, and she felt her whole soul warmed and lighted by the brightly burning torch. But all the dreams she had that night were not pleasant ones. She had some that were dark and frightful, and from which she awoke with a cry of terror. But she did not believe that they meant anything. She had often had bad dreams, and when the morning came and she tried to reason upon it, she concluded that those bad dreams—so much worse than any she had ever before had, were the result of the excitement to which her mind had been subjected. Of course, there could be no hidden truth in them.

The forenoon of the following day had passed half away. Zak Turan was at work in his stall, when suddenly he was aroused by the appearance of six of the royal slaves accompanied by an officer. The slaves bore a covered chair with them, and when they came in front of the stall they set it down.

"Is this the dwelling of Zak Turan, the cobbler?" asked the officer.

"It is," answered our friend.

"Then we have a message from the king."

"From the king!" uttered the cobbler, whose first thought was of the language he had used the day before, and of consequent imprisonment and whipping.

"Ay. You have a daughter?"

Now the old man trembled with a worse fear still. "I have a daughter," he said.

"So the king is aware, and we have been sent to bring her to him. So show us the way at once."

The poor fellow knew not what to say. His soul was torn by the most fearful doubts, and his knees shook beneath him.

"Are you going to obey?" cried the officer, in a rage.

It was a serious thing to disobey an officer from the king, and Zak Turan knew that disobedience would be of no avail, even should he persist in it, for seven stout men were more than he could cope with, even setting aside the thousands of soldiers who could be called upon to

come down upon him. So he came out from his stall and led the way round to the gate that led through the little garden, that being the most direct way to the part of the dwelling the family usually occupied.

Now it so happened that just as the slaves were turning the angle of the garden wall, Feridoon came in sight of the stall, and when he came up he entered it, and not finding the cobbler there he passed in by the same way he had entered the day before, and proceeded at once to the apartments of Zillah.

Meanwhile Zak Turan, followed by the officer and the slaves, had entered the lower part of the house, and there they found Zillah in company with her mother. The maiden started upon beholding the stout slaves, for so had commenced one of the frightful dreams she had had during the night.

"Ha!" uttered the officer, as his gaze rested upon Zillah, "it needs no great exercise of wit to tell that this is the girl which has so excited the love of our king. You may consider yourself one of the fortunate ones of the kingdom, fair lady, for the king loves you."

"Loves me! The king loves me!" gasped Zillah, seizing hold upon the edge of the table for support. "You speak in riddles."

"Not at all. His majesty—whom may God protect—has seen you, and loved you, and now he would have you for his own. He bade me tell you that you should be placed among his wives, and be the most favored of them all."

"Impossible!" cried the frightened girl. "The king cannot have seen me. You are mistaken. It is some one else that he means. I have not been out for a long while."

"You mistake. Did not three travellers stop here last night?"

"Yes," whispered Zillah, through whose mind the truth now flashed at once.

"Ay—and one of them was the king himself. He saw you and conversed with you, and his heart is wholly yours."

"But he surely does not mean—"

Thus far the maiden spoke, but she could speak no more then. The memory of a terrible dream came crashing upon her, and her head became dizzy and her heart faint. She sunk down upon a seat and clasped her hands over her eyes.

"Surely," spoke Zak Turan, as he saw this, "you will not rob me of my child?"

"Out upon thee for a treasonable dog!" cried

the officer, in high wrath. "Does not the king take whom he pleases to wife? And shall you be exempt from a royal right which is as old as the world itself? I have come from the king, and woe will be upon you if you give not up your child readily."

"I shall not resist," uttered the old man.

"I do not think you will," responded the officer, with a wicked smile. "But honestly, I am surprised at this. Why, I had thought that the child of a poor cobbler like yourself, would have been overjoyed to become the favorite of a powerful king."

"Hold, sir!" cried Zillah, finding her tongue now. "We are poor in the goods which merchants have, but we are rich in the gifts of Heaven. Rob me of my virtue, and I am poor indeed! Rob these people of their child, and they, too, will know what poverty is."

"Do not talk of virtue!" cried the officer. "What more virtuous than a king's wife?"

"What more base than she who ministers solely to a king's base passions?" she cried.

"'Tis not the king's passions which are so base—'tis his love that calls you."

"O, talk not to me of a king's love, when it changes as does the wind that blows. The true love of the heart is not a thing that can be put off at every pretty face that one sees. I tell thee, officer, 'tis only a passion most base that moves the heart of the king towards me. Let him take me now, and in one short month he will tire of me, and find another."

"Very prettily spoken," returned the officer, "but you had better save your wit for the king. Come, we have not time to waste."

"You will not take me away?"

"I hope you will not force me to take you. The king will like you much better if he knows that you came of your own free will."

"As such I will never go!" cried Zillah, sinking once more into her seat, and bowing her head upon the table.

"Then I must take you, that's all," answered the officer, somewhat angrily.

At this moment Zak Turan mustered up courage enough to beg that his child might be spared; but he was spurned by the officer as though he had been a dog.

"Out upon thee, thou cobbling toad!" the lieutenant exclaimed. "By the host of Ahri-man, I'll have thee tied to the post of thine own door, and send the very boys to whip you if you speak thus again."

The poor man shrank back, for he knew full well that he could do nothing for his fair child. He knew that the king could take for his wife whom he pleased, and that were he even to demand the daughters of all the satraps in the kingdom, he could have them all. How, then, should he, a poor cobbler, escape?

The officer went up and took hold of Zillah, and lifted her to her feet, and then he called for the slaves to come and take her out. They had just lifted her from her feet when the inner door opened, and Feridoon entered the apartment.

"Where is Zillah?" he asked.

"Feridoon! Feridoon!" cried the maiden.

"O, save me! save me!"

As she thus cried, she made one powerful effort and broke from the grasp of those who held her, and sprang to the side of her lover.

"What is it all?" the young man asked, in blank surprise, but not forgetting to wind his arm about the form of her he loved.

For a moment no one spoke. The officer had never seen Feridoon before, and he knew not who he was, though all six of the slaves knew him from having seen him at the royal palace with the satrap. The officer was the first to speak.

"Young sir," he said, "I hope you will not deem it prudent to interfere with our business."

"First let me know what your business is," retorted our hero.

"We come on business from the king."

"But what has this maiden to do with that business?"

"Everything. She is to be the king's wife, and we are now come to carry her to him."

"Zillah," said the youth, turning his gaze upon his beloved, "explain this to me."

"Last night, after you had gone," commenced the fair girl, seeming to place a strange confidence in the power of her lover to save her, "three men came here and spent the evening, and when I would have withdrawn from the room, one of them detained me, and afterwards he talked with me. It now seems that that man was the king in disguise. He fell in love with my face, and now he sends these men to fetch me to him."

"O—and is that all?" uttered the youth, after he had heard the story. And then turning to the officer, he said: "I am sorry the king should have bestowed his affection where it cannot be returned. But you will inform his majesty that Zillah is already beloved by another—by one who loved her ere the king saw her, and by one whom

she loves in return. Of course when you explain this to the king, he will rest satisfied."

"He will be satisfied when he holds the maiden in his possession, and not till then," returned the officer. He spoke quite moderately, for he was evidently charmed by the youth's beauty and melody of speech.

"But you see that such satisfaction cannot be his," promptly responded Feridoon.

"I hope you do not mean to resist the king's orders, sir?"

"Resist, say you? Let me rather hope that you will urge your suit no farther after the explanation I have made."

"This is fruitless talk. You know the royal will, and I am forced to obey it. You will resist it at your peril. Come, lady, your kingly lover waits for you."

As the officer thus spoke, he advanced and seized Zillah by the arm, but hardly had he done so when Feridoon laid his hand upon him, and hurled him across the room. First, the officer was stunned—and second, he was amazed.

"Did you understand what I said?" asked Feridoon, as soon as he saw that the lieutenant was gazing upon him.

"It was you who must have misunderstood," gasped the officer.

"Nay—not so. I told thee this maiden was my affianced bride, for so she is—and so she was ere the king saw her. If, under those circumstances, the king persists in his will, then he does so against every law of right and justice, and with God for my hope, and right and justice for my armor, I will face every dastard king in the world. So you may go and tell your royal master."

There was something so bold, so noble, so really gigantic and sublime in the look, the tone, and the bearing of the youth, that the officer shrank away. But he happened to remember that there was royal wrath at home, and he started forward once more, though not so far as he did before.

"Slaves!" he cried, turning to the six stout fellows who attended him, "take that girl and bear her out to the chair. Be quick."

Those were men whose duty never called upon them to think. They only had to obey, and as their commander spoke, they advanced in a body towards where the youth and maiden stood.

"Back!" uttered Feridoon. "Lay a hand upon this girl, and you—"

He did not finish the sentence, for the slaves

had already advanced, and were upon the point of putting their order into execution. By a simple movement, Feridoon placed Zillah behind him, and then he seized the foremost slave by the girdle and the throat, and lifting him clear of the floor, he ordered Rudabah to open the outer door. The indignant wife and mother hesitated not an instant, and as soon as the door was opened the youth hurled the slave out into the garden. On the next instant he seized another, and hurled him after the first, and it was not until three of them was thus disposed of that the officer could recover his presence of mind sufficient to enable him to draw his sword; but now, when he had seen his third man thus hurled out of the house, and the prospect being apparent of himself soon following, he not only drew his own sword, but he ordered his three remaining followers to do the same.

"Ha!" uttered Feridoon, as he saw the movement. "Fear not," he softly whispered to his beloved. "No blood shall be shed."

As he spoke, he drew his own sword, a weapon which he had selected from among more than three thousand which his foster-father had brought him, and moved towards the officer. The latter placed himself upon the most approved guard, but with one quick, resistless blow Feridoon severed his sword in twain. Then he seized the fellow by the neck, and with one effort, sent him headlong into the garden.

"Now prepare to die, dogs!" the hero shouted, at the same time raising his sword. The movement had just the effect he had anticipated, for the three remaining slaves sank down upon their knees and begged for mercy.

"Then get you gone!" our hero exclaimed.

The frightened slaves scrambled to their feet, and with quick movements made their way into the garden, where their companions were just climbing to their feet and rubbing their bruises. Feridoon followed them out, and at another order from him they scampered into the street, one of them, however, crawling upon his hands and knees. As soon as they were gone the youth closed the gate, and then returned to the house.

"Now, sweet one, you are safe," he uttered, as he clasped the still trembling girl to his bosom. "By my life, no unholy king can gloat his passions upon the being of my love. O, I would slay every monarch on earth first, and then turn to God and the people for their approval."

"Holy angels!" ejaculated the poor cobbler,

just beginning to recover himself, "what sort of arms have you got? My life of lives, how you did throw 'em about—just as I would flies, or spiders, or pebbles. Ormuzd protect us! How did you do it?"

"Just as you saw. But why do you tremble, Zillah?"

"Alas, I tremble now for you."

"For me?"

"Yes. Those men will return to the king, and they will tell him all that has transpired, and then he will send men enough to take you, and he will put you to death!"

"But he has not slaves enough to take me."

"But he will send his soldiers."

"Are they men?"

"Yes."

"Then I will tell them all the circumstances."

"My son," said the cobbler, "it would seem that you are not well acquainted with the people of our city."

"I must confess that I am not. Until yester-

day and the day before, I never went among them."

"Then you know them not, nor do you know our king."

"Yes, yes—I know Sohrab well. This single act, and the looks of his face, are enough. I know *him*."

"Then know that the people fear him, and that they will do his bidding, let it be what it may. He has five thousand armed slaves in his own palace!"

"And yet I do not fear them," returned Feridoon, "so long as God is with me. But wait and see what shall come. Let us not fear until we have occasion. Come, Zillah, you must not fear more, for I am with thee. I have struck down thine enemies once, and I can do it again."

Then Feridoon sat down, and ere long his companions were so entranced by his conversation that they fairly forgot the danger that had threatened them, and which was threatening them still.

CHAPTER VI.

A KING IN TROUBLE.

SOHRAB was not upon his throne. He had hurried off the business of the day, leaving the local officers to carry out the details both of judgment and punishment, as they saw fit. He had hurried his satraps off to administer the governmental affairs as they might choose, and the great hall of audience was nearly empty. A few slaves remained behind to guard the place, and ever and anon some officer of the city guard would drop in to make his report, but finding the business closed for the day he would gaze about awhile upon the magnificence of the place and then depart. And this hall of judgment was worthy of being gazed upon, for every art known to man at the time was lavishly displayed there.

This royal audience chamber was over three hundred feet long and near one hundred wide. The sides were supported by eighty marble pillars, each thirty-five feet high, the bases of which were formed by two recumbent lions to each column, and the capitals or chapiters, being four human forms placed at the angles of a square, facing outward and stooping over so that their heads formed volutes, while the roof rested upon their shoulders. These pillars were further adorned with, all sorts of strange devices, and much matter was written upon them in what are now called the "arrow head" characters. The

dome, or centre piece, was supported by eight more columns, seventy feet high, and in the centre of the circle of these columns stood the royal throne, covered with gold and precious stones. There was vast wealth collected here; and all for one man, or at the will of one. And the thousands who labored received for their work nothing but stripes and chains.

But the king was not now upon his throne. Twenty slaves guarded it from the hands of the profane while their royal master disposed of himself elsewhere. In another part of the palace, where the open windows looked out upon the broad garden and the artificial river, was the king, and only four trusty eunuchs attended him. He had gone there to await the coming of the peerless Zillah. He had donned his most sumptuous suit, and little dreamed he that the maiden would spurn all his offers. He knew nothing of that deep feeling which rests in the pure soul. Those of his satellites who understood it told it not to him, for they knew that he would not comprehend it. He imagined that his royal favor and love were more worth than all the other things earth or heaven can give for this life.

"Those slaves are tardy," he muttered to himself. "Have they not been gone long?" This last remark was directed to his eunuchs,

and they answered it in the affirmative, of course. And yet time sped on and the officer and slaves did not return. Sohrab became vexed and impatient, for he was not used to having the execution of his orders so long delayed. And then the object for which he waited was one that gave him more than usual impatience. Never before had he seen so beautiful a being as the one he now waited for. He had many wives and many concubines, but not one in all his palace had beauty like the daughter of the poor cobbler.

At length, when the king could contain himself no longer, the sound of footsteps was heard upon the stairs leading from the garden, for by that way had Sohrab directed his officer to return. In a few moments more the door of the apartment was opened, and, throwing aside the heavy tapestry that covered it, one of the eunuchs who had been placed on watch entered. He reported to the king that the slaves were returning, and that they bore the chair upon their shoulders.

"Ha—well!" uttered the king. "And think you the chair contains anything?"

"It does, sire, for the slaves walked heavily under their burden."

"Good! The damsel took time to make herself presentable. I shall like her the better. What ho, here. Go help to bear the fair burden up to our presence. Now by the gods, I shall revel in bliss such as mortals seldom find. Such wit—such beauty—such transcendent loveliness were never seen!" And the king paced to and fro across the broad apartment, as he thus spoke with himself. "'Tis strange, though," he continued, "that she should have remained hidden so long. Her old father has been sly of her charms. But by my royal head, I found her. Zounds! what a simple thing will lead to great results. Had I not heard the cobbler laugh so loudly I should never have entered his place—and had I not entered I should not have seen the jewel of life I found. God kept her for me—surely!"

The king was stopped in his soliloquy by the entrance of the officer whom we have seen at Zak Turan's with the six slaves.

"Ha! Manto!" cried the king, "where is your charge? Bring her up at once."

"Sire," said the officer, bowing low and trembling, "she has not come."

"Not come! What mean you?"

"The lady we could not bring."

"Not bring? What had you in your chair but the damsel?"

"One of your own slaves who sprained his thigh so that he could not walk."

"Now by the gods, dog, you lie in my face!" cried the king, in a towering passion. "Why do ye tell me that you could not bring her?"

"Because we met with resistance we could not overcome."

"At human hands?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then why did ye not tell them that it was the king who had sent you?"

"I did."

"Mark me, Manto—speak no lie. Did ye speak to a living man, and tell him 'twas the order of the king, and then did that man resist?"

"Yes, sire."

"Was it the cobbler?"

"No. He resisted not at all. 'Twas a young man whom I never before saw; but one of the slaves knew him as the son of the satrap Rustem, named Feridoon."

"Ha! and has Rustem thus bred traitors for his king? But who helped this bold youth?"

"No one, sire. He is himself a tower of strength and daring. He seized your heaviest slaves and hurled them from the house as you would hurl a light javelin from you."

"You are lying, dog! No man could do that."

"You shall ask your slaves, sire."

Accordingly the slaves were called in, and they not only corroborated the statement of Manto, but they went on and described the youth's prowess in such terms that for a while rank wonder took the place of anger in the royal mind.

"Did the youth give any reason for his act?" the king at length asked.

"Ay. He said he loved the maiden himself."

"Now, by the throne I hold," cried the monarch, striding across the apartment, "I'll have that rebel's head even were he thrice the son of a satrap! Ay—I'd have his life if he were my own child. Shall I—the king—the monarch of Persia—the ruler before whom all people bow, be thus trampled upon by a boy? What ho, there! Slaves! Dogs! Up, up—and haste my will. Call up the captains, Manto, and take a hundred soldiers. See them well armed and then go bring me the damsel and the youth. Bring the latter alive if you can, for by my royal crown, I would look upon him ere he dies. But harm not the damsel. Let harm come to her, and I'll have the life of every man I send! Ere the sun goes down I must possess the beautiful Zillah, for my heart is turned with love of her."

Haste thee, Manto, and let my bidding be done. I'll await thee here."

"They may have fled."

"Then find them."

"We hasten to do your bidding."

"And your lives shall answer for your success."

As the king thus spoke, his lieutenant left the apartment, and ere long a hundred soldiers were ready to set out, and with them went six more slaves to bear the chair. People gazed upon them as they passed, and wondered what plan the king had on foot now.

As soon as Sohrab was left alone with his eunuchs, he began to pace the apartment more moderately than he had been doing, for his thoughts were deep and interesting. Feridoon was his subject, and he gave it much weight. He remembered the youth, and he remembered how fair and beautiful he was. As the reader knows, the king had seen him but once, and that was only two days previous to the present time.

"Slave," he said, stopping suddenly in his walk, and addressing one of his eunuchs, "go and find Kanah, and bid him attend me here."

"By my soul, there's something strange about this youth," he muttered, after the eunuch had gone. "I noticed when he sat by my side in the great hall, that he behaved not as other people behave in the presence of the king. He did not cower nor shrink before me, and his obedience was only in outward form. I'll know him well ere long—and he shall know me!"

Soon afterwards one of the inner doors of the apartment was opened and an old man entered. He was older than the king, for he had surely seen more than the threescore-and-ten years of allotted life. Yet he was firm and upright, with a face of great shrewdness and intelligence. His name was Kanah, and he was the king's chief counsellor and adviser.

"Ah, good Kanah, I have sent for you to help me in a curious matter. Do you remember the youth whom Rustem brought hither with him on the day before yesterday?"

"Ay, sire, I remember him well."

"Then sit thee down here. Now listen." And thereupon the king went on and related all that had happened at the house of the cobbler. "Now, Kanah," the monarch resumed, "whom do you think this youth to be?"

"Surely, sire, I know not."

"But do you think him really the son of the satrap?"

"No."

"Ha—I thought so."

"I will tell you my reasons, sire. In the first place, Rustem told us that this youth was just one and twenty years of age on the day he brought him here, and that he had kept him thus far secluded so that he might not become contaminated by the vices of other youths. Now if you will take the trouble to refer to the records in the archives of the kingdom, you will find that twenty-three years ago this very month, Rustem went into Arabia with a part of Kei Khosrou's army, and was gone three years. This is the first evidence of contradiction. But later than that I have one from his own lips. It is not ten years since Rustem used to pray that God would bestow a son upon him, and I remember well, that within these nine years, last past, he has offered sacrifices of goats and incense to God for the same favor. And more do I remember. About five years ago, Rustem was approaching old age with sedate and sorrowful looks, and I think that at that time he told me, when I rallied him upon his dejection, that God had cursed him with barren wives. Then it was that he went off to the Hetzendarras to hunt, and when he returned I could see that he came with smiles and good humor, and so he has been ever since."

"By my life, Kanah, you have a wonderful memory," said the monarch.

"I have looked up these things, sire, since the satrap brought his son here. When I first saw that youth, and heard Rustem tell that it was his son, I began to doubt it. Out of curiosity I hunted over the proof, and now you know it as well as I do."

For some moments the king remained silent; but at length he said, while a sudden light shot athwart his countenance:

"Good Kanah, I believe I am ahead of thee. Dost thou not remember the mighty man of war—Kei Khosrou's great general—GUSHTASP?"

"Ay, well," returned the counsellor.

"You remember he was the most comely man of his time, and the most mighty in strength?"

"Ay—most truly, sire."

"And is not this youth Feridoon his counterpart?"

"Now, by the gods, my noble king, you have lifted the veil!" cried the counsellor, with enthusiasm. "This youth is the very self of Gushtasp in form and feature; and well do I remember me that the mighty general had an infant son when he was—was—"

"Killed by the robbers of the desert," suggested the king, seeing his companion hesitate.

"Ay—that is it," added Kanah, with a strange smile upon his face. "But I remember well that he had an infant son, whom he took with him when he went away upon his last mission."

"Rustem shall be questioned upon this," resumed the king.

"Yet, sire," quickly added Kanah, "you may be sure Rustem meant no harm. Whatever may have been his purpose in claiming the youth as his own son, you may rest assured that he meant no harm to you or to the kingdom."

"I hope not."

"O, I know he did not, for I know Rustem well, and he is one of your most loyal subjects. Get the truth from him, but do not accuse him of wrong."

And here the subject of Feridoon's nativity rested for the present. The king and his counsellor conversed a long while upon the curious circumstance, but they arrived at no farther points, merely dwelling upon the various surmises which such a matter would be likely to bring up—the main point being whether Rustem had brought Feridoon up from infancy, or whether he had found him more recently.

CHAPTER VII.

A MOST STRANGE BATTLE.

THE wife of Zak Turan prepared dinner in her best style, for she had conceived a love for Feridoon such as she would have felt for her own child, and she wished to do him homage. The dinner was eaten, and then Feridoon went away and sat down with Zillah, while Rudabah cleared off the table, and shortly afterwards Zak Turan went out to his stall to work, for he had a pair of sandals to stitch before night. It was about half an hour after this, while the youth and maiden were conversing ardently together, that the cobbler came rushing in all pale and trembling.

"The Lord save us now!" he ejaculated. "A hundred soldiers are coming this way, and the same officer leads them who was here this morning. Ormuzd be with us now!"

Zillah uttered a sharp cry upon this intelligence, and she would have fallen to the floor in a swoon had not her lover caught her in his arms.

"Fly, good Feridoon—fly!" cried Zak Turan.

"Not so, father," calmly replied the youth. "I shall not do myself the injustice, for only the guilty flee when any man approacheth. Yet I would have thee conduct Zillah away from here, for she may be moved with too much fear. Mother, you will take her to her own apartments."

No sooner had Feridoon thus spoken, than

Rudabah took Zillah by the hand to lead her away; but the maiden revived upon the moment she found herself about to be taken from her lover, and it was not until Feridoon laid his express command upon her, that she could be induced to leave. Hardly had she gone and left our hero and the cobbler together, when the heavy footfalls of the soldiers were heard without. The youth sprang to the door, and he reached it just as the soldiers were entering at the gate.

"Hold there, hirelings!" shouted Feridoon. "Now what seek ye?"

"Both you and the damsel Zillah," returned Manto, for he it was who led the band.

"And wherefore me?"

"The king will punish you for your deed this morning."

"And wherefore the damsel?"

"That our king may take her to wife."

"And if she were once within the king's grasp he would make her his wife in spite of all reason and persuasion?"

"He would do his own will most surely, for kings are not prone to ask advice upon such matters."

"Then you may go and tell the king that Zillah he cannot have, and tell him also that I will come to him on the morrow."

"But we have orders to take you both now."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then you must go by force. The king bade me fetch you to him either dead or alive."

"Then he is angry because I resisted you before?"

"He is."

"You did not tell him that the maiden was already beloved by another?"

"I did."

"And does he still persist in having the maiden for his own?"

"Most resolutely."

"Then what a tyrant have we for a ruler! Go tell him that I will come to him to-morrow, and that then we will argue our respective claims face to face."

For a few moments Manto seemed undecided how to act; but he quickly remembered the order of his royal master, and his mind was as quickly made up.

"Young sir," he said, "you have heard the orders we have from the king. Both you and the damsel must go with us now. If you will submit quietly, all will be well; but if you choose to resist, the result be upon your own head."

"Be it where it will, I shall not submit, because if I do, Zillah will most assuredly be carried to the king, and then no one can protect her. Methinks you, being a man, can judge somewhat of my feelings. You know how you would feel were the king to send a guard of slaves to seize your own loved wife, for the God above us knows that I love the beautiful Zillah as though she were already mine in marriage. Now I have said all. I hope you will not put me to another test."

Manto knew that he should fail in argument, and as time was precious, he resolved to do his work at once. So he beckoned to his followers and bade them seize the youth immediately.

"Remember!" cried Feridoon, "this is right against wrong. I shall defend the maiden that I love against any power that shall set itself up in open violation of the laws of justice. And remember one other thing. You are many, and I must therefore fight to the death if you force me!"

But the soldiers heeded not his words. They knew nothing of him but what they now saw, and with a confident movement some dozen of those in advance moved towards him. It so happened that a stout lever of olive wood stood against the door post—a lever which Zak Turan had used for prying his door stone into place—

and this the youth seized at once. It was some six feet long and very stout and heavy. This repeated wrong had roused his indignation to its highest pitch, and as he saw the movement of the soldiers towards him, seeing some of them draw their swords, and knowing that they were ready to kill him rather than let him escape, he became angry beyond self-control; it was the first time within his memory that his passions had been so thoroughly aroused. He swung the huge club over his head, and at the first sweep four men were laid prostrate. Higher and higher rose his wrath as he saw the whole phalanx draw their swords, and with his whole might he rushed upon them.

Manto had at first wondered if the youth could sway that huge club with skill enough to effect anything, but his wonder changed to deadly fear, for he not only saw the ponderous lever flash through the air like a lightning-bolt, but he saw the youth's face, and he knew that the savage had supplanted the philosopher. He shrank behind his followers, as he had a right to do, and when he saw them falling like grain before the reaper's hook, he resolved to make one last effort.

"What ho! my men!" he cried, "now move together! rush in upon him at once—all of you—in a body!"

But the rushing part of the work was upon the other hand. No man, nor no body of men could stand before the enraged youth. He had his enemies all before him, and not one of them could reach him, for that stout club performed its circuits instantly, and its force was such that a whole section was swept down at once. Swords were of no more use than so many chips would have been. Those of the soldiers who had been without the gate rushed in when they heard the sound of conflict, and as they saw their comrades falling before them they pressed blindly forward, shouting and pushing and brandishing their swords. But soon the current set against them—those in advance began to fall back. Yet they braced themselves up, little dreaming at the moment that they were only forcing their brethren into useless destruction.

Thus went the work on. Feridoon was not only yet untouched, but at every stroke he seemed to gain new strength. The truth was, he was losing his humanity—he was forgetting that he was a man. He seemed only to realize that he was a beast defending his young from a merciless foe. He swept his enormous club over his

head, and the royal soldiers fell before him like chaff.

But such a combat could not last long. One stout man will make quick work with a hundred puny boys, and Feridoon did the same with the hundred soldiers. The garden was literally strewn with prostrate bodies, and when at length the youth passed the gate and entered the street, only six men were left to flee before him, and one of those was Manto. He had had the judgment to keep out of the way. As soon as Feridoon found that there were no more to oppose him he let the point of his club fall, and having gazed until the six fugitives had disappeared he returned into the garden. Some of the men were just crawling to their feet, but they fell back as they saw their terrible enemy returning. The youth did not molest them, however, but pursued his way at once to the house, where he found the poor cobbler trembling like an aspen.

"Now, mine excellent host, what is the matter?" asked Feridoon, as he noticed the old man's perturbation.

"The Lord preserve us!" uttered Zak Turan, in trembling accents. "You have slain the king's soldiers, and most surely will he have vengeance. You will not always be here to protect us, and ere long they will come down upon me."

"Fear not, my kind father," returned the youth, persuasively. "You have had no hand in any of these doings, and so I will inform the king."

"Will you tell him that?"

"Most assuredly."

"But will you see him?"

"I shall see him to-morrow."

"He will kill you!"

"I think not. I shall go armed, and if he issues orders against my life, I shall make him a hostage for my safety. Fear not for me."

At this moment, when the cobbler was upon the point of speaking, the door was opened, and Feridoon instinctively raised the terrible club which he still held in his hand; but it was quickly dropped, for he saw that the new-comer was none other than Kobad, the astrologer. He gazed eagerly about him as he entered, and the tremulousness of his flowing white beard showed that he was moved by some strange fear, but when his eye rested upon Feridoon, his face brightened, and he hastened forward.

"My son," said he, "what strange thing is this which has happened?"

"'Tis the result of the doings of a wicked king," returned the youth.

Kobad sat down and Feridoon took a seat by his side, and then the latter related all that had happened, commencing with the first coming of the three disguised men, and ending with the conflict that had just transpired. When he had closed his startling narrative, the astrologer was for some moments lost in deep wonder, but a sense of the real situation of things about him came soon to his mind, and he started from his seat.

"Noble, generous, brave boy," he cried, embracing the youth as he spoke. "How rightly did the satrap judge when he called thee the LION HEART. And you love the gentle Zillah?"

"O, with every thought and feeling of my life!" quickly answered Feridoon.

"God be praised for that!" fervently ejaculated the venerable man. "I knew you would love her, for she is worthy of it. But alas that the foul king should have seen her, seeing that she has no rank to protect her loveliness. And yet rank or wealth is nothing to him. Sohrab takes whom he pleases, from the parents of his court to those of the very beggars. But Zillah must be removed now, for she will be no longer safe here."

"I will protect her," said Feridoon.

"But you cannot always be with her."

"I will marry her."

"Not yet," said the old man, with something like a smile upon his face. "And even if you did, it would not save her, for you must remember that the king will not give up his purpose. You can see that in the very thing he has done to-day—first sending his slaves and then his soldiers. His next movement will be to send a body of lancers and archers, and against javelins and arrows your strength will not avail you."

Feridoon saw the justice of these remarks, and after he had pondered awhile, he asked Kobad what he would do for Zillah's safety.

"I will take her with me and place her where the king will not find her," answered the sage. "I know of a place he will not easily find, and thither I will take her at once—and not only her, but her parents also, for Sohrab will surely take them in his rage. The influence of the satrap may protect you, but you can go with me if you like."

"I would go and be with Zillah, but not to flee from the king, for on the morrow I shall go to the royal palace. But promise me one thing

—when Zillah is hidden away I may sometimes go and see her.”

“Most assuredly—only there must be a condition. You shall go only when I can go with you.”

“And why so?”

“Do you not see that if the king allows you to go at large you will be watched? He knows that you love the beautiful damsel, and that you would be likely to visit her. Your steps would be followed accordingly, and Zillah’s place of concealment thus traced out.”

“I see,” quickly returned the youth, frankly, “and I will obey. But there is yet one other thing. How long must Zillah remain thus concealed? For I see not how the power or will of the king is to be overcome, but by perpetual concealment.”

The astrologer bowed his head, and at the expiration of a few moments he said:

“We will speak of that at some other time. I can save her for the present, and for the future I can see things which may not be explained now. But we must move quick, for in all probability the king will send a host here as soon as his discomfited messengers return with their tidings of failure.”

Accordingly Zillah and her mother were called down, and they both readily embraced the astrologer’s offer, for they saw that it was the only real means of safety. So they set about preparing themselves at once. Zak Turan packed up what little money and small articles of value he had; Rudabah took such articles of clothing as she thought she should need; while Zillah only thought of spending her present moments with her lover; but her mother worked for her, and ere long they were ready to start.

“Let us wait no longer,” said Kobad, when he saw that all was ready.

“But I may see her soon,” urged Feridoon, still clinging fondly to the being he so deeply loved.

“Yes. I will come for you as soon as is proper. But if you delay us now, ruin may fall upon all. Be wise, and you shall be the happier for it.”

The youth understood the meaning of the sage, and with one more fond embrace and one more sweet kiss, he handed Zillah over to her mother, and prayed that God would protect her. Then Kobad led the way out through the back passage into the narrow, tiled covert behind the house, and from thence he proceeded on through a low, vaulted corridor that connected with the bathing houses belonging to dwellings upon another street. Ere long, he came out into a narrow, dark lane which seemed to wind about on purpose for intricacy, and as the way was here clear he pushed on with quick steps.

Feridoon watched the party till they had passed from sight and then he turned his steps towards the front yard. Here he found some sixty men either dead or so far gone that they had no life to show, but he could not help the matter now. He supposed the servants of the king would come and take care of them in good time. There may have been a momentary pang—a sensation of pain—as the youth looked upon the work of death he had done; but he quickly remembered that those he had slain were men let out to do evil for another—men who were ready to stake their lives in an event of ever so great a crime, and that their death had been necessary to secure the safety of one who was worth more to earth and to God than all the hireling soldiers a tyrant can muster. These thoughts calmed his mind, and with a soul satisfied with this, its first great essay of life, he moved on.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KING STILL IN TROUBLE.

LONG and impatiently did the king await the coming of those whom he had sent for Zillah, and often did deep curses fall from his lips as moment after moment sped away. His old counsellor had left him, and he had called his four most trusty eunuchs to bear him company. At length the sound of feet came upon the stairs, and a slave who had been set upon the watch entered.

"Now, slave, what news bring you? Speak it out, and stand not trembling there. By the heavens and all the gods that dwell therein, you'd better not crush my hopes. What have ye seen?"

"Some of your men are returning, sire."

"Some, say ye? How many?"

"Perhaps a score."

"They come as messengers, or mayhap they bear the young rebel, while those with the maiden come more slowly."

"But those who come now bear the litter with them."

"Ha—then *they* bring the maiden. Go conduct them here at once!"

The slave had seen that the litter was borne with its crimson canopy sidling, and he knew that no maiden could be in it, but he dared not tell his thoughts to his king; so he withdrew, and shortly afterwards Manto entered alone. He

was pale and trembling, and as he met the inquiring gaze of his monarch his eyes fell to the floor.

"Now, Manto, *speak!*" uttered the king, in a harsh, forced tone. "Where is the maiden—and where the youth?"

"We could not take them, sire," answered the lieutenant, mustering all his courage.

"Beware, Manto! Do not tell me a lie. Do not tell me you *could* not."

"I speak the truth, sire."

"Did you not take one hundred men with you?"

"Yes, sire."

"And what did they?"

"As God is my Maker and my Hope, they fell like chaff before the wind, beneath the single arm of him whom you call Feridoon, or the Lion Heart."

The king sank down upon a seat and gazed at his lieutenant in the face. Thus he remained for a full minute, and then he sprang to his feet.

"Manto!" he said, in a hoarse, husky voice "I do not think you would lie to me."

"I could not, if I would."

"Then tell me truly—did this youth, all alone, do as you have said?"

"Of a verity did he, sire."

"With what manner of weapon?"

"With an enormous club—a ponderous beam of wood."

"Then he must have slain some of my guard."

"Full threescore, at least."

"There is more than human work in that. The youth has some powerful afrite* under his control. It must be so. But tell me all, Manto."

The lieutenant was much relieved when he found that the king did not kill him nor swear vengeance against him, and he related all the circumstances just as they occurred, save that he gave a little extra coloring to the appearance of Feridoon. When he had concluded, the king remained for some moments in deep thought. He was naturally superstitious, and hence his mind had something to dwell upon besides the disappointment he suffered. But his energies were not by any means gone, and ere long his next proceeding was planned.

"Now mark me, Manto," he said, arising, and speaking slowly, and with energy. "Go and call up a hundred more men. Take the stoutest of our archers, and see that each man has his javelin—for by all the powers of darkness he cannot withstand the finely tempered points of our arrow and javelin heads. Go you with these, and bring him to me. Order him to surrender, and if he does not, then kill him at once. Haste,* now, and when he is despatched or secured, the maiden may be easily taken. Do you understand?" This presented something tangible and sure to the lieutenant's mind, for now his men could fight at a distance, and he did not think the flesh of the wonderful youth would be impervious to the best and surest arrow heads in the kingdom. So he told the king he would obey, and then set at once about his mission.

"I'll have the damsel yet," the monarch muttered, as soon as he was left alone with his eunuchs. "And when I do have her, I shall have well earned my right to the possession. By my royal diadem, I'd possess her now if it took every man in my kingdom to pay the price!"

An hour passed away, and during that time Sohrab had been part of the time in the outer porch with his pet birds, and part of the time with his eunuchs in the great hall where he meant to receive his beautiful prize.

But the end of that hour again brought disappointment. Manto returned and reported that neither the youth, the maiden, the cobbler nor

* *Afrite*—a species of genie held in much dread by the ancients as being of the demon stamp.

his wife could be found; but he said he had set his hundred men upon the search, with directions not to give up until some of them had been found.

The king listened until his lieutenant had finished, and then sat down again and bent his brow upon his hand. Had he been only half as much moved as he really was, he would probably have struck Manto dead at his feet at once, but his emotions were so deep that they literally operated as a weight upon his passions. Reason came to him, as comes the last iron touch of will to the dying man when all hope is gone. He sat thus for full five minutes, but those minutes seemed hours to Manto, for he now expected nothing else so much as instant death.

"Manto," he at length said, in a hoarse whisper, "go and send Kanah to me, and then send at once for the satrap Rustem."

With a step quicker by far than usual did the lieutenant obey this mandate, for he felt as though he were escaping death.

Soon the counsellor made his appearance, and to him the king related what had happened. At first, the old minister could scarcely credit the story, but when his royal master had told all, he was forced to give it credit.

"Has not the youth an afrite to obey his will?" Sohrab asked.

Kanah started.

"'Tis a long while," he answered, "since I have seen reason to believe in the existence of those powerful spirits, but I will not take it upon myself to say that they do not exist. But I would rather see Rustem."

"I have sent for him."

"Then we shall know something from him."

They did not have to wait long for the satrap, as he was already on his way to the royal palace when he met the messenger. He was very pale when he entered the apartment, and his countenance showed plainly that he labored under much fear. The king looked up as his satrap entered, and for a moment he seemed undecided how to receive him, but his first words were very moderate.

"Rustem, we have been anxious to see you. A most wondrous thing has happened—a thing almost passing belief, and we want your assistance in digging up the mystery."

"Sire!" spoke the satrap, trying to compose himself, "I know to what you allude. You speak of deeds which my son has this day done."

"Ay—that I do!" replied the king, quickly and vehemently. "Do you then know of them?"

"Yes, sire. My son reached home before I came away, and he told me all that had happened. I was not only angry, but I would have punished him had I been able. However, my anger will be some punishment."

"And he told you all? How he refused to comply with my orders? how he attacked my own slaves? how he killed my own guard? and how he hurled defiance at me?—at me—his king and lawful sovereign?"

"Yes, sire—he told me all."

"And what was his reason?"

"He loved the girl himself."

"But how could he have seen her, since he has been all the while confined?"

"He never saw her until yesterday."

"Ha! And that is the amount of priority of love he claims! Why did you not strike him dead when these awful confessions fell from his own lips?"

"For two reasons, sire. First, I am not strong enough; and second, he is my own child, and my father's—"

"Stop! stop! good Rustem, you forget yourself," uttered the king, interrupting him. "Are you sure he is your own child?"

The satrap started as though an arrow had pierced his heart. He gazed first into the face of the king, and then into that of the counsellor.

"What mean you, sire?" he at length asked, hesitatingly.

"Do you not know what I mean?" asked Sohrab in reply, eyeing the satrap sharply. "I asked you if you were sure that youth was your own child. Now speak no falsehood, for I would have the truth."

Rustem did not hesitate long, for he saw that his monarch had some clue to the truth, and he resolved to speak it.

"Sire," he said, "I have never meant to deceive you, or to deceive others, any more than he deceives who tries to hide his faults of form by change and taste of dress. You know how long I prayed for a son, and how fruitless were my prayers. Five years ago I went to the mountains of the Hetzendarra on a hunting expedition. An old hunter told me of a strange animal he had seen in the mountains. On the next day I went in search of it, taking the hunter for my guide. I found the strange thing the fellow had seen, and gave it chase, and when I found that I should lose it at that rate, I drew my jav-

elin and threw it with a quick, strong aim; it struck the animal upon the hip, and stopped him. Now, sire, this strange animal was nothing less than a wild youth, habited in a garb of leaves. In every particular was he like the wild beasts about him, save that he seemed to take a deep interest in hearing me converse. He could neither speak a single word of any language nor understand a word of mine. But I took him home, and he conceived an affection for me. I soon found that he had some faint recollections of language, and I employed two of the best scholars I could find to educate him. In one year's time he could speak plainly and read, and at the end of five years he stood before me the most polished man I knew, for during all the time of his studies his mind had not once been distracted by extraneous affairs. And now, sire, do you wonder that I should have called him my son? that I should have loved him as such?"

"Kanh, what think you?" asked the king, turning to his counsellor.

"I think Rustem's story one of deep interest, and one of truth, as well. And now we have some clue to the youth's prodigious strength. I remember a wild man who was found in the Caucasus, and it was almost impossible to capture him. I would not believe that the human frame could give room for such strength, if I had not seen it. And then remember one other thing, sire: remember the tree from which this scion probably sprung. Gushtasp was the mightiest man in the kingdom. You remember that no six men in the army could beat him from the arena."

"Gushtasp!" uttered Rustem, in surprise. "What mean you?"

"Simply," answered the king, "that this youth, Feridoon, must be the son of that general. His every look shows it."

The satrap began to see now what the others had seen. He reflected a while, and he remembered how Gushtasp had looked, and then he knew Feridoon was his counterpart.

"Upon my life," he replied, "you do recall now my own memory of the great general. It must be as you have said."

"And even Gushtasp himself was tinged with rebellion," remarked the king.

"Rebellion! Gushtasp!" uttered Rustem.

"Ay; but we will not speak of the dead. Let me know what you mean to do with your adopted child."

"It is against you, sire, that his deeds have been done; but I pray you that his ignorance of government and the rights of kings may be set down in his favor. I am sure he meant no disrespect to his royal master, but only thought of the love he bore the damsel."

"Well," answered the king, after some moments of thought, "I will do thus: to-morrow the youth shall come before me, and if he will confess where the maiden, Zillah, is hidden, and give her quietly up to me, then shall this first grievous offence be forgiven. What say you?" he asked, searchingly.

"Most assuredly shall he do so, sire," quickly answered the satrap. "I suppose the damsel is beautiful—"

"As lovely as the full moon at midnight, in the open heavens. As beautiful as the lily of the vale and the rose of the hillside," rapturously apostrophized the king.

"But yet," resumed Rustem, "he should not grasp her from the king. He will attend me here to-morrow, and you shall speak with him as you see proper."

"We will," answered Sohrab. "But you had better prepare the youth ere he comes hither. Let him understand himself thoroughly, so that

I shall not have to induct him into the first principles of obedience."

"I will prepare him for the interview, sire."

"But you must not tell him of his parentage."

"Of course not," returned Rustem; "for we are not sure."

"O, as for that matter, we are sure enough," interrupted Kanah. "If you should lose an article to-day, and in twenty years hence I should find one looking exactly like it, and at the same time knowing that none other ever existed like it, I should feel sure that I had found that which you had lost. Gushtasp was killed close by those mountains, and his wife and infant boy were with him. The wife fled into the mountains, and was afterwards found dead. To be sure, her features were not recognized, for the wild beasts had made horrid work there; but her jewels were found and recognized. The infant was not found. If you remember how Gushtasp looked, you must know that Feridoon is his very self."

The satrap admitted the truth of appearances, and shortly afterwards he was dismissed. He took his way towards his own palace, but it was not without many misgivings, for he knew that he had truly a lion heart to deal with.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXTRAORDINARY SCENE.

It was dark when Rustem reached his palace, and he found that Feridoon had already retired, so he let his business be until the morning. When morning came, he repaired to the youth's apartments, and found his charge engaged in reading. His first aim was to examine more particularly Feridoon's features with regard to his nativity. He was surprised to find how true a copy were those features of the features of him to whom allusion had been made. Rustem had known Gushtasp well, and they had been firm friends while the latter had lived. He now knew that Feridoon must have been the infant which had been lost; but his thoughts did not stop here.

After Rustem had passed the wishes of the morning with his protege, he sat down and pondered upon a new subject that had forced itself upon his mind. He remembered that when the former king died, Gushtasp had been murdered upon the desert, and he wondered if Sohrab had not had something to do with that affair, for both he and Gushtasp were popular generals, though the latter was the favorite of both soldiers and people. Had Gushtasp lived, Sohrab might not have been king. These thoughts led Rustem into a chain of dark surmises; and some modes of expression which he had heard Sohrab use served to strengthen his fears—for he did fear

that his king had been guilty of a great crime. He felt sure that no foul measures had been used with Kei Khosrou, for he had seen the corpse lying in state, and there were no marks of violence upon it; but he could not feel so sure in the case of poor Gushtasp, for he had been met upon the desert, while travelling home with his wife and child, and only three attendants, and murdered. The circumstances were these:

The general, Gushtasp, was away when he heard of his king's death, and feeling that he had something to do with government, he left his army and hastened towards home; but in the desert, close by the base of the Hetzendarras, he was met by assassins and brutally put to death. It passed at the time as the doing of robbers. The corpse of the murdered general was brought to the city, and when the people wept and mourned over it, all knew how much he had been beloved. The assassins had spared his noble features, and even in death the bold general looked the hero the people had loved to worship. But Sohrab was now king of Persia, and he had always treated Rustem with favor; but even in this there was policy, for the satrap was influential, and his influence was worth keeping.

Thus did Rustem arrive at two points. He believed Feridoon to be the son of his old friend,

and he *feared* that that friend had fallen by the device of him who now ruled Persia; but this latter point he resolved to keep most sacredly to himself.

"Feridoon," he said, at length, "very soon you will go with me to the royal palace."

"I am ready, for I promised the officer yesterday that I would see the king to-day."

"But do you realize, my son, how great has been your offence?"

"That I have made the king very wroth I am aware."

"But you have trampled upon his authority."

"Let the king point out to me how, for I would have no contention with my protector."

"But you have broken our laws, and are hence liable to most severe punishment. Yet on one condition will the king pardon you."

"Ah! and what is that?"

"That you will tell him where the damsel is concealed, and relinquish all claim upon her."

"I shall think of this."

"And I hope you will think well of it, and remember how much trouble you will save yourself by simply complying with our king's wishes. Surely you have not become so overpowered by the charms of the poor cobbler's daughter that you cannot give her up."

"There are two sides to that proposition," returned Feridoon, with a smile. "I am young and ardent, while the king is old and satiated. Is he so overpowered by the charms of a cobbler's daughter that he cannot give her up?"

"But he is a king, and his will is law."

"Perhaps it is so. But wait until I see the king, and then my mind will be made up."

"But you understand the premises, do you not?"

"Perfectly."

And there the matter rested, for Feridoon was unwilling to argue with his father, and the latter did not wish to chafe the youth before they went to the royal palace. He hoped that the presence and authority of the king would awe the offender into submission.

It was near the middle of the forenoon when Rustem and his protegee set out, and when they reached the audience-chamber of the royal palace, they found that most of the business of the day had been transacted. There were some few cases for judgment still left, but the king saw the youth when he entered, and the remaining business was quickly despatched. This being done, the king dismissed all save his own officers

and attendants, among whom were Kanah and Manto, and then, at a sign from his majesty, Rustem and Feridoon advanced to the marble platform in front of the throne.

The king gazed long and earnestly into the face of the youth, and he showed by his countenance that he was deeply moved. At length he spoke.

"You are called Feridoon?"

"I am, king."

Sohrab started when he heard that answer, for not before in a long time had he been answered so boldly, and with such perfect freedom from all restraint. And then the phraseology was unusual. He was never before addressed by the mere term, *king*.

"You were at the house of the cobbler, Zak Turan, yesterday?"

"I was."

"You resisted my orders and killed my messengers."

"I opposed a body of ruffians who would have dragged a poor female from her home against her will."

"Beware how you speak," uttered the king, growing angry.

"If you would have the truth from me you must not cramp my tongue. I speak as I have learned to do—with freedom and boldness when I speak the truth."

"Did not these men whom you opposed inform you that they came from the king?"

"They did."

"Then you knew whom you were resisting."

"But you forget, king, that men who will stoop to such work might also lie."

"They did not lie. But enough of this. You saw their badges, and you knew they came from me. Now why did you resist them?"

"Because they would have dragged one whom I loved to ruin and misery."

"Ha! You insult me now."

"I mean no insult: I speak but the truth. If you sent for that maiden, then what would you with her?"

"Make her my wife."

"But she refused to come to you, and told your messengers that she could not, and when they would have dragged her away by force, she shrieked aloud for mercy. Would you have dragged one of the daughters of your people ruthlessly to her own woe, simply to gratify a momentary passion, which would have been

transferred to another in one short month at the farther test?"

"I would have made the damsel my wife. Kings are not wont to ask favors; they command, and the people obey."

"So I have learned you look upon the kingly office," returned Feridoon, gazing boldly and searchingly into the king's face, "but not so can I look upon it. You derived your power from the people, for by their will alone were you placed upon the throne you now occupy. A true king rules for the people's good, and his account is kept by God. The happiness of a single subject is worth a king's utmost care; but O, who shall believe that a true king would blindly follow out the craving of depraved passions, even when sorrow and woe must fall upon his subjects in consequence?"

There was consternation in the audience-chamber. The attendants were astounded to hear a simple youth speak thus to the king, but their looks also showed that they deeply sympathized with every word that had been uttered. The king himself was at first moved by rage and passion, and twice did his hand fall upon his sword-hilt, but there was something in the countenance of the youth that stayed his hand. Perhaps his thoughts ran back to the time when a noble general fell dead on the hot sands of the distant desert, and mayhap he saw so much of that ill-fated man in the features before him, that his heart was moved in fear and remove.

"Let this folly pass," the monarch at length said. "Your youth is some extenuation of your tongue's range. But now we come to another point, and you will do well to consider carefully upon the subject ere you answer, for I see that you have a habit of speaking hastily. Of course you know where the damsel, Zillah, is concealed."

"I do not, sire."

"Speak no falsehoods."

"I have not yet learned to speak falsehood, king. I know not where the maiden is."

"Do you know which way she went?"

"I do not."

"But you will know."

"I have had the promise of knowing."

"Ah, that will answer. Now listen to me. Your crime has been one which richly merits death, and it has been but the most unusual clemency on my part that has kept the stroke of the executioner from you, and on these conditions will I extend to you a full pardon: you shall inform me where Zillah is as soon as you

shall have learned, and you shall relinquish all claim to her hand and love."

"And is that all?" asked the youth, with a bitter smile breaking the calmness that had rested upon his face.

"Upon those conditions shall a full pardon be granted."

"King of Persia," spoke the youth, in a firm, direct tone, "I saw the beautiful Zillah before you did, and I loved her, and in return did she love me, and before God were our loves made binding upon us by holy vows. Thus my right is in the love of Zillah, and no claim have you upon her."

"Beware, or I shall yet teach thee to thy cost that kings do not bow to the caprices of such as you."

"And thou shalt know, mighty king, that such as I cannot be trampled upon even by him whom people call sire. Neither will I tell thee of the maiden's abiding-place, nor will I give over my claim. She is mine; and before my God and these witnesses here assembled, I do accuse you of the most gross cruelty and injustice. I shall not bow."

Sohrab sprang from his seat and clapped his hands. His face was very pale, and his teeth were set. At the signal thus given a dozen stout slaves appeared, and as they gathered about the king, he cried:

"Seize the traitor and bind him!"

"Hold!" cried Feridoon, starting back a pace, and drawing his sword; "let me first know why I am to be bound."

"O, my child," implored Rustem, clasping his hands and springing towards the youth, "make no resistance here. It cannot avail you, the archers will shoot you."

"I mean not to resist," returned Feridoon; "but I would know why I am thus to be bound. Speak, king, and tell me."

"Bind him, I say!"

Feridoon hesitated an instant, and then, dashing aside those who had gathered about him, he sprang upon the throne and seized the king by the arm, and forced him back upon his seat. Then he placed the point of his sword against the monarch's breast. The people started back aghast, and a cry of horror went up from every lip.

"Back, back!" pronounced the youth. "I mean the king no harm; but if one person places his foot upon the lower step of this throne, my sword shall sink to this man's heart. Keep back,

THE KING AND COBBLER.

and no harm shall be done; but forward, and you shall lose your king!"

Those people who saw this strange movement knew that the bold youth meant what he said, and they dared not move. The king himself was sore afraid, but he could not move; he was held down by a grip of iron. He had turned deadly pale, and his limbs shook with terror.

"Now, king," spoke Feridoon, "answer my question. I do not mean to resist you, but I wish to know why I am to be seized, and also to have these witnesses now present know it."

"Have you not resisted the royal authority?" gasped the king.

"Yes; but that is not the direct cause. Is it not because I refuse to give up to you one whom I love?"

The king did not answer.

"Answer me!" pronounced the youth, with a glance that thrilled the monarch to the very soul. "Do you not mean to imprison me, or to punish me, because I will not give up to you a virgin who has begged of me to protect her from your embrace? Answer me."

"It is so. I gave the order for the bringing hither of the maiden, and you resisted it."

"Ay," resumed Feridoon, in a bitter tone; "that is the cause. Now listen, ye who stand around this throne, and mark what justice is done in Persia. Let the people know how stands the law of eternal justice in our country. Your king made his way in disguise to the home of a poor cobbler, and there his eye rested upon a beautiful maiden, who was the joy and light of that lowly household. He—beware, king. If you move you shall die, as sure as God is!—He went in there, and when he saw that lovely dam-

sel, his passions were fired, and he resolved to possess her. I was there. The girl turned her prayers to me, and begged of me to save her. I did so, for I loved her, and she was my own beloved. The rest you know. Tell this to the world, and then men shall know what kind of a king they have. I have spoken, and now I shall make no more resistance, unless my life is attempted."

As Feridoon thus spoke, he let go his hold upon the king, and stepped down from the throne. For a while not a word was spoken. Those who stood around looked furtively at the monarch, and then they gazed upon each other. The daring youth had placed his sword in its scabbard, and now stood with his arms folded across his breast. But the king soon came to himself. He started up again, and in a hoarse, rattling tone, he said:

"Bind him, now!"

Thus he spoke, and then sank back again upon his throne. The stout slaves moved up, and Feridoon offered no resistance. Heavy chains were placed upon his wrists, and these were again secured about his waist.

"Now lead him to one of the strongest of our dungeons. Off with him, and when this cloud has rolled from our mind, we will give him sentence. Rustem, you will remain, and you, Kannah, I would speak with you."

The youth was led away, and shortly afterwards the attendants left the audience-chamber, only the king's eunuchs and the satrap and counsellor remaining. With the latter Sohrab wished to confer respecting the extraordinary scene that had just transpired.

CHAPTER X.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

FERIDOON was plunged into a deep, dark dungeon, and there he was told he should remain until he had promised to reveal the hiding-place of Zillah, and also to relinquish all claims to her hand. After what had happened, Rustem did not dare to interfere in any way, for he well knew that the king would brook nothing of the kind. He was grieved to know that his protegee was thus imprisoned, but all he dared to ask was to be admitted to see him. The king informed him if he would use his influence to bring the youth to terms, he might have passage to the dungeon. The satrap readily promised this, for it had been his own purpose to do that same thing.

"But he shall wait awhile first," said the king. "He shall first taste of the prison, and then he may be more pliant."

So the satrap had to wait a week, and at the end of that time he went to see the youth. He found him in good health, with his spirit broken not at all. After embracing him, and explaining how things were going on in the world without, he came to the principal object of his visit. He did not at first state what the king had said, but upon his own responsibility did he urge the youth to give up all ideas of claiming Zillah's love, to give her up to the king, and promise to make known her place of concealment as soon as he should discover it. But all was of no

avail. Feridoon would not give up one point of the position he had taken. Rustem urged and argued, begged and entreated, but the youth was firm.

"But," said the satrap, "you may be sure that the king will keep you here until you comply with his wishes, even though you spend your life here. Now, once more, listen to me. Under no circumstances can you hope to enjoy this damsel. If you relinquish your right to her love, you will lose her, I know—and so you will if you remain here. And now see the reason to obey the wishes of our monarch. By so doing you will go forth to liberty, and then you will soon find some other maiden who will make you happy with her love. Be guided by me."

"Ah, my friend," replied Feridoon, with a smile, "I can take my liberty whenever I wish. They think I am stoutly chained; so I am. But see." And as he spoke, he slipped the irons easily over his hands. "You see my hand is no bigger than my wrist. Now, with these irons off, how easily can I overcome my keeper when he comes with provision, and then make my escape. But I do not wish to do so now. Yet do not urge me any more on this point, for I will not tear out the very joy and life of my soul to please a wicked king. I am firm."

Rustem spent much more time in arguing the point, but he at length turned away in despair.

He did not go as he came, however. From argument and persuasion he passed to the authority of a parent. He commanded the youth to obey, and when, after much such commanding, Feridoon remained still firm, he became angry. He spoke hotly to the young man, but he received only cool, calm words in reply. At length the satrap went away, and his soul was angry when he turned from the dungeon. One of the most ancient and binding customs of the times was the obedience of children to the commands of parents, and Rustem now became nearly as wroth as the king had been, and he told Feridoon that he was a wicked, ungrateful child, and that no punishment could be more severe than he deserved.

The youthful prisoner had cared but little for the anger of the king, but he was deeply grieved when he found that his protector was also angry, and when he was left once more alone, he wept. But when he came to reflect that right and justice were on his side, he soon forgot his pain, and contented himself with knowing that he had done nothing which his inmost soul told him was wrong.

And now how moved matters in the world without the prison ?

The news of the imprisonment of Feridoon soon spread throughout the great city, and people had the whole story by heart. The scene that had transpired in the audience-chamber had been all made known, and painted in its most thrilling colors, and the people had learned all the circumstances which had led to it. Zak Turan was a man generally known in the place, and he was as generally beloved, and of course the sympathies of the populace were with him, his fair daughter and Feridoon. Sohrab was feared, but never loved, and some of the bolder of the people took up the matter and made speech upon it at the street corners and in the market-place. And then there was one other source of excitement—a source of which the king little dreamed, and of which the reader shall soon know.

One day (it was eight days after Feridoon had been thrown into prison) the king sat all alone in one of his own apartments. He had been sitting thus for half an hour, and during that time his lips had been moving with incoherent, half-uttered sentences. Thus he sat, when an attendant announced that Kanah was in waiting. The old counsellor was at once admitted, and there was trouble upon his countenance when he entered, which the king at once saw.

"How now, good Kanah? No tidings of evil, I hope."

The counsellor seemed to have had his course all marked out before he entered the royal presence, for he at once said :

"Sire, are you determined to prosecute your claim to the daughter of Zak Turan?"

"Of a verity I am, good Kanah," quickly answered the king. "By my very life, that girl's beauty haunts me night and day. I must have her. And then, again, I have another reason. I will not be thwarted in my first purpose. By the heavens, Kanah, I should not survive the chagrin of being overcome in so simple a plan."

"And yet, sire, the youth, Feridoon, must be liberated."

"Not until he does my bidding."

"But your throne is not safe now. All through the city the thing is making noise, and the people are angry at what you have done."

"Then lash them into quiet!"

"That may not be so easily done. The people have now become like a man suffering under some delicate malady which must be ministered to with care and caution. They sympathize with Feridoon, and as openly do they denounce your majesty."

"Ha! do they dare?"

"Yes; and they even threaten."

"Not me—the king?"

"Ay—yourself, sire. But this is not all. They have a most strange and powerful ally in the person of Kobad, the astrologer. You have heard of him?"

"Ay, I have," returned the king; "yet I never saw him. But what does he?"

"He has preached to the people, and shown them how you oppress them; and in the present case he has told them that Feridoon is one raised up of God on purpose to save his people."

"Ha! And does the arch-traitor sow rebellion so boldly?"

"He does, sire; and the people swallow it most readily. At the street-corners and in the market-place he makes much speech."

"Then why did ye not stay the rebel?"

"I have had no chance."

"And my officers—why have they not brought him before me?"

"For fear of arousing the people. It is true, sire, that they are already chafed and sore, and many of your officers are with them."

The king started from his chair, and would

have launched forth into a furious strain had not the counsellor interrupted him.

"Sire," he resumed, in a persuasive, but yet firm tone, "I have been planning for you. In the first place a rebellion of this sort may be quelled more easily by removing the cause than in any other way. Now if you release Feridoon from prison you will gain two points. First, you will remove much of the cause of ill-feeling among the people; and, second, you may thus find the damsel you seek."

"Ah," uttered the king, stopping in his walk and seating himself again; "how can that be?"

"Set the youth at liberty, and then watch him. In all probability he will soon make his way to the place where the damsel is concealed, and if he is watched, as he may be, of course you will thus—"

"I see, I see," exclaimed the king. "By my life, it shall be done. The youth shall go—and the lovely Zillah shall be mine. But mark me, Kanah, I'll brook no more of this sedition. My soldiers shall be set upon the guard over these unruly tongues, and death shall most surely fall upon him who dares speak thoughts of rebellion. But your plan shall be followed, and you shall have more work yet. Take eight of my most trusty eunuchs, and set them upon the watch over the youth's movements. They are keen, quick-witted fellows, and they will know how to work. Just give them their cue, and the rest may devolve upon them without fear."

"I will do your bidding, sire."

"And fetch me this astrologer, too, Kanah. By heavens! bring him to me and I will put him upon the speech of his life."

"It must be as you say, sire; and still I would recommend that he be not molested yet. The people love him, for he is kind to them, and has taught them much; and I have heard that to him is this same Zillah indebted for her superior attainments. He has been her constant tutor for several years."

"And shall I, a king, submit to such things?"

"Nay, sire, by no means. But wait and see what effect the liberation of the young prisoner has."

The king consented, after a while, so to do; but he saw that his counsellor had more yet to say, and he urged him to speak.

"You must bear with me, sire, and know that

I simply speak for your good," said Kanah, with evident reluctance.

"Speak on."

"Then, my king, why not give over this pursuit after the damsel?"

"How, Kanah? Give up Zillah, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"By my life, no! Sooner shall half my kingdom sink to everlasting ruin! She must be mine, for I love her; and I will not be turned from my purpose by the rabble. Now urge this point no more."

Kanah knew that urging would be useless, and he let the matter drop, and shortly afterwards he went away with the order for Feridoon's release. He went himself to the dungeon, and he found the prisoner just eating his supper. He told the youth that he was free, and when the latter asked to know why he was thus liberated, he was told that the king had resolved to let the matter drop.

"And," continued Kanah, "I trust you will be wise in future, and, for the sake of peace, sacrifice a little of your own personal desire."

"But the king has not found Zillah—the damsel of whom such mention has been made?" uttered Feridoon in tones of sudden fear.

"No; he is making no search for her."

With this assurance Feridoon left the prison, and made his way at once to his protector's dwelling. Rustem was of course much surprised at seeing the youth, and it was some time before he could be made to believe that he had been set at liberty by order of the king, but when he did realize that his protegee had been really set free by royal will, he did not exhibit that deep joy which Feridoon had anticipated. Our hero was not long in arriving at the conclusion that his father was yet angry with him, and without further remark he went at once to his own apartments.

The youth's servants had learned of their master's arrival, and they crowded about him with wild, unfeigned joy. This made our hero happy, for he had found friends, and he stopped not to inquire in his heart how stood their rank. He enjoyed their truth and devotion, and he balanced them in the scale of his own judgment, and they proved to be better men than many who might buy and sell them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAVE.—CLOUDS.

FERIDOON had not been in his apartment ten minutes ere he was both surprised and pleased by the entrance of Kobad, the astrologer. He started quickly forward to embrace the venerable sage, and when he had done this, he wished to know how the intelligence of his release was so quickly spread.

"I saw you come from the palace," returned Kobad. And then he wished to know upon what terms the release had been made.

Feridoon explained it all—related all that Kannah had told him, also how he had been treated in his prison house.

"And now," he said, with much earnestness, "may I not see Zillah?"

The old man was silent for a few moments.

"You will not refuse me?"

"No, no," slowly and thoughtfully pronounced the sage. "But that the king has given up the idea of obtaining Zillah, I do not believe. You, my son, have been released only that he may find her the more speedily. He knows you will find her if you can, and his spies will track you to her place of refuge. Do you not see it?"

"I see that such may be the case," replied the youth.

"Ay—and we must be governed as though we *knew* it were the case. You shall see Zillah to-night, but we must move carefully. She, poor

girl, needs to see you much, for her fear for your safety has been great, nor could all my positive assurances give her soul peace or quiet."

This served to make the youth more anxious to set out, and it was at length arranged that Feridoon should disguise himself as an old man, and then start as soon as it should become dark. The astrologer took it upon himself to procure the disguise, and to this end it was necessary that he should depart at once. It was just nightfall when he returned, and he brought with him the garb and the white wig and flowing beard of an old man. The ardent youth quickly clothed himself, and having promised not to let his gait betray him, Kobad started to lead the way.

Instead of passing directly out into the street, Kobad led the way out through the gardens back of the satrap's palace, and entered not a street till he had left the palace a mile behind him. Feridoon walked with a stout staff, and he took good care to stoop and shuffle along, so that his gait might not belie his white beard and flowing garb. Had our two adventurers stopped and listened attentively, they might at times have detected a stealthy footstep near them, and had they been able to observe everything about them, they might have seen a dark figure crouching away continually in the darkest places, but still hanging upon their footsteps. But they neither

heard nor saw anything to give them alarm. They felt sure that with such precautions as they had taken, they were safe.

After Kobad had passed beyond the point where the officers of the king were in the habit of ending their excursions, he quickened his pace. His course was towards the northwestern section of the city, and in three hours from the time of starting, he came to the confines of the town, which at that point were flanked by high, perpendicular cliffs, all jagged and broken by abrupt angles and huge masses of fallen rock. Here the astrologer gazed carefully about him, but he saw no one, and yet, not far off to the right, behind a projecting mass of rock, there was something that had life and motion. A dark object had glided in there only half a minute before the sage made his survey.

Kobad's next movement was to pass on to where a thick clump of wild mulberry bushes grew, and having worked his way through these he came to a small deposit of sand which appeared once to have been the bed of a stream or pool. Here he waited until Feridoon was by his side, and then he brushed away a lot of sand close by the point of a stone that projected out in a shaft from the adjoining cliff, and having done this a ring of iron was revealed. This he seized, and by it he raised a trap door of wood, revealing thus an aperture some three feet square, at the mouth of which appeared some steps which were also of wood. He bade the youth pass down and then he followed, carefully closing the door behind him.

These steps were only six in number, and when our hero had reached the bottom of them he found himself obliged to stoop slightly in order to avoid the rock which formed the ceiling of the passage, for a passage it must be, since he could feel the solid rock upon both hands. As soon as Kobad had closed the door and come down, he took the youth by the hand, and having bidden him to stoop, he passed on slowly, making several abrupt turns, until at length he reached a point where tiny rays of light could be seen shining through chinks in the rock. Here Kobad stopped and kicked with his sandal, and in a moment more a door opened and—Feridoon found himself in the presence of Zillah.

There was a quick cry of joy from the lips of the lovely maiden, a low murmur of love from the enraptured youth, and then those loving hearts were pressed together, and their beatings of love were accompanied by bright, warm tears of pure and holy joy.

"And you are free—free from the power of the unholy king," murmured Zillah, as she gazed up into the face of her lover.

"Yes, light of my soul; and how blessed is that freedom, since it brings me to thee!"

"Ah, my soul's master," returned Zillah, with sparkling eyes and waking smiles, "how lovely becomes this cave in the rock when you are with me. Until now it has been dark and cheerless, and my soul has been heavy and sad, for fear of harm to thee has dwelt heavily upon me. But joy cometh now."

Thus spoke the lovers, and when their passions had become more calm, Feridoon turned to Zak Turan and his wife. They were both well and in good humor, and the joy they experienced at seeing the youth was too plainly written upon their faces to admit any doubt touching its reality. There was also a black slave in the cave; he was a faithful servant whom the astrologer had provided.

As soon as Feridoon had time to look about him, he saw that the strange apartment to which he had been thus conducted, owed nothing to the art of man save the concealment of the entrance and the wooden steps. It was a single chamber, some thirty feet square, with walls very regular in their angles and surfaces, and not far from twenty feet high. The ceiling was rough and jagged, the rock hanging therefrom in points and curiously stellated forms, while in the back part there was a long fissure through which the place was ventilated, and which in the daytime admitted light. This aperture opened outside upon the face of the cliff opposite from the city, and at a point almost inaccessible, so that there was no danger of the place being discovered from that quarter.

Upon inquiry our hero was told that this cave had been found only a few years previously, and that none living, save those now present, knew of its existence. Nearly two hours were passed by Feridoon in sweet conversation with Zillah, and at the end of that time the youth turned towards the venerable sage, for there were some doubts upon his mind he would have cleared up.

"My father," he said, "it surely seems a safe place here for our friends—safe from the immediate power of the wicked king—but what is to be in the future? How are we ever to find safety for them in any other place? For surely we cannot imagine that a life can be blessed with much joy that is forced to spend itself here."

"Most assuredly not," replied the astrologer;

"and I trust that they will not be forced long to remain here."

The youth gazed into Kobad's face, in hopes that he would say more, but he did not, so he asked further :

"But how shall they find safety to live in the city, or even within the kingdom, as other people do?"

Feridoon waited some moments, but the old man did not answer; and he continued :

"The king, if your suspicions are correct, still means to seize upon Zillah whenever he can."

"I am sure he does," Kobad said.

"Then how—tell me if you know—how, oh how, shall our lovely Zillah find safety from his wicked arts, was she to remove back into the city?"

"That is more than I can tell you now," answered Kobad, with his head bowed, and his hand pressed hard upon his brow. "Yet I feel that the time is not far distant when that season of safety shall come. My son," he continued, while his voice sank to a low, thrilling tone, and his eyes were raised partly heavenward, "I can see in the future many things that are hidden from you, and from other mortals. I can see storms and tempests; and I can see sunshine and calms; and in the midst of all I can see a spirit of bright presence that holds the destiny of the beautiful Zillah in its hand. I may not read the future to you now, but be assured that to me the scroll is opened and that I can read its import faithfully. You may hope for the best, and unless some darker power than any I now see shall arise upon the scene, all will be well."

Feridoon pondered awhile upon these words, and he concluded to ask no more questions. If the astrologer meant him well, then he knew enough already; and if evil was meant, then surely questions would be of no avail. But upon this latter proposition his mind only glanced as upon an idea which flitted by in the usual course of thought, for he felt no more fear of evil intent in the soul of Kobad than he did of falsehood in the breast of his own beloved. Yet he was anxious—he was anxious for the time when he could call Zillah his own and have no fears come to mar his peace.

And it is not strange that he should have still experienced some anxiety respecting the final consummation of this good, for he could not conceive how it was to be done. Yet he resolved to trust his aged friend, and school his heart to

rest content with the assurance he had just received.

At length Kobad arose and signified his purpose of retiring. Feridoon drew Zillah upon his bosom and spoke a few more hurried words of love, and then he was ready to depart. He replaced the false beard and hair upon his face and head, and having taken his staff he followed Kobad from the place, with the promise, however, that on the second night from that he should visit his loved one again.

When Feridoon reached the surface of the earth once more, he found that dark clouds were rising up into the heavens from the westward, and that they had already drawn their sombre veils over most of the stars. He turned his gaze upon the high cliffs behind him, and a strange awe crept over his soul as he saw how black and drear they lifted their rugged peaks against the clouded sky. Not far from him, where a mass of disconnected rocks seemed ready to come tumbling down upon him, there was an object that might have startled him had he given it particular note. It did not move, nor did it look unlike the small columns of dark granite that surrounded it, and yet a very close observer would have been struck with the strange resemblance which that object bore to the human form. And more than this: had Feridoon been perfectly versed in each separate conformation of the rocks about that spot, he would have seen that *this* one must have become located there very recently, for surely there was no such thing there three hours before!

But the clouds rolled up into the heavens more heavily and gloomy, and the soul of the youth became oppressed with a sense of disquiet amounting to a strange sort of dread.

"These clouds are fortunate," remarked Kobad, after they had started on their way, "for now the darkness will most safely hide us from the gaze of any who may cross us on our way."

"But they affect me strangely," returned Feridoon, in a low, nervous tone.

"How so?" asked the sage.

"They throw a leaden weight upon my soul, and seem to obscure the brightness I had learned my hopes to dwell in."

"That is a mere whim. To your young and ardent feelings everything should be bright and joyous, but when you are older you shall find that clouds are not easily dispensed with, even in our own hopes and aspirations. One continuous glare of light would be tiresome to the vision,

and one unbroken chain of joy would soon cloy the senses. Clouds are but the relief given by an all-wise Maker to throw the better parts of life's picture more vividly out."

"True," answered Feridoon. "I know what you mean; but now my soul is really oppressed."

"Then rise above it. Shake off the fear, and smile with the hopes I would give you."

The youth made no answer to this remark, but with his head bowed and his hands clasped behind him he followed on by the side of his friend. He would have been cheerful if he could, but he could not.

At length they reached the palace of the satriap, and as it was near morning, Kobad accepted the youth's invitation to remain with him awhile and sleep. Feridoon called one of his attendants and bade him keep watch near the door, and not to allow him to be disturbed until the sun should have been up, at least, three hours.

And both the old man and the young retired. The sage soon fell asleep, and his rest was sure and sound. Not so the youth. He closed his eyes, but sleep would not come to him. There

was another idea in possession of his faculties. Once his senses became lost beneath a drowsy weight, but no sooner were the actual things of life shut out, than he began to dream. He was again in the cave with Zillah, and while he pressed her to his bosom he was aroused by a loud, rumbling noise, and upon looking up he saw the top of the cave open, and an enormous afrite came down and seized upon Zillah and bore her away from him. He cried out so loud that one of his slaves came to his bedside to see what was the matter. The youth grasped the poor fellow by the neck, and would most assuredly have strangled him had not a sense of his real situation come opportunely to his mind. When he first saw that black face bending over him he only remembered the foul afrite of whom he had just dreamed.

At length, however, just as the heavy clouds which had been gathering in the heavens began to empty themselves upon the earth in quick-falling drops, he sank into a deeper slumber, and the fatigue of the body overcame for a while the vagaries of the mind.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE TOILS.]

AFTER Feridoon and Kobad had left the cave, the inmates spent some little time in conversing upon the subject that had been broached by the youth. Zillah seemed to have hung with much anxiety upon the answers of the astrologer, for she had a deep interest therein.

"My father," she said, addressing Zak Turan, "why will you not tell me the secret of Kobad's deep interest in both me and Feridoon?"

"Why, you know as well as I," the father returned. "He has often told you that he loved you for your kindness and goodness, and hence he has taken pleasure in instructing you; and is it not a natural consequence that he should love you, after having for a while enjoyed your society?"

"But what should have induced him at first to come to me?"

"He saw you first by accident. He came one night past my stall, all footsore and weary, and he begged of me to give him food and rest. I took him in and ministered to his wants, and he remained beneath my roof several days, having become so worn down by fatigue as to be really unable to pursue his way. During that time you ministered wholly to his wants, for your mother was busy with household duties, and—to tell the truth, she was not in the best of humors at having such a helpless stranger on her hands."

"I remember that!" said Zillah.

"And do you remember," resumed the cobbler, with a meaning twinkle in his sharp, gray eye, "how fondly your mother used to speak of our guest? how sweet and mild were the words she selected for her modes of expression when making allusion to the old man?"

"Mark ye, Zak Turan," uttered Rudabah, shaking her finger menacingly in her husband's face, "you are well now, and your face becomes you well for such a piece of humanity as you chance to be; but beware that you don't get it marked in a way that wont be so pleasant."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the cobbler. "I know your prowess well, my sweet angel, but surely you will not seek offence in the words I uttered. Did I not say that your words were sweet and mild?"

"Ay, but what meant you?"

"Did I not speak the truth when I said so?"

"No, Zak Turan."

"Bless me, my angel, I did not think, when I sought to make it appear that you always spoke sweetly, that you would give the lie to my meaning."

The wife tried hard to be angry, but there was such a blaze of good nature upon the round, ruddy face of her lord, that she could not.

"Answer me one more question," said Zillah,

as soon as her mother was quiet. "What first induced the astrologer to bring Feridoon to me?"

"I know not, I'm sure. He never gave me any reason, save that the youth was worthy of your love; and I think he was right in that."

Zillah's eyes sparkled as her father thus spoke, for her own heart gave a thrilling assent to his words, and instead of asking more questions, she communed with her own thoughts. There was much to perplex her in the circumstance of her introduction to Feridoon, and also in the care which Kobad manifested for her welfare; but she did not allow it to annoy her, for she found too much joy in the very source of her difficulty.

Nearly an hour had passed away since their visitors had gone, and Zak Turan had arisen for the purpose of retiring, when his attention was arrested by a sound from the mouth of the cave. He stopped and listened, and in a moment more he was sure he heard some one descending the wooden stairs.

"Kobad has returned," he said, as he became assured that his ears had not deceived him.

"But why?" uttered Zillah, who felt some fear.

"Perhaps there is threatening of a storm. The air comes down through our window cold and damp, and I can see no stars up there as usual."

"But by this time he would have been more, much more than half way to the palace of Rustem."

"You forget that half of the time that has passed must have been spent in returning."

This thought, together with the hope of seeing Feridoon, served to dispel the maiden's fears, and she waited with anxiety for the opening of the inner door. And yet, all was not joy in her heart; there was a lurking dread there, which manifested itself in a trembling, heaving breath, and in a clasping of the hands upon her bosom in a prayerful attitude.

"Surely," uttered Rudabah, "Kobad would not blunder about in that fashion!"

"Unless there has been some accident," quickly suggested the cobbler.

"O," cried Zillah, "if Feridoon has been hurt!"

As she gave this utterance breath, there came a smart knock upon the door, and Zak Turan stepped quickly to it.

"Who is there?" he asked.

"Feridoon," answered some one from without, in a strained tone.

The cobbler immediately opened the door, and on the next moment half a dozen soldiers rushed into the apartment of the cave. Zillah saw the steel-bound garbs of the new comers, and with a wild cry she started back, but she had no place of refuge.

"Who are ye?" inquired Zak Turan, as soon as he could command his speech.

"We are from the king," was the reply of the officer who led the soldiers.

"And how found ye entrance here?" was the poor cobbler's next question, he being moved almost as much by astonishment as by fear.

"This faithful servant of the king brought us hither," replied the officer, pointing to one of the eunuchs of the royal palace.

"And for what have ye come?"

"For yon beautiful damsel whom we see crouching away as though she feared us."

Zillah sunk down on her knees and clasped her hands, and on the next moment her mother sprang towards her and made an attempt to protect her, but she was quickly disposed of by being seized and pushed away. Zak Turan knew that his interference would only tend to make matters worse, and he wisely refrained from any physical demonstration. But he sank down upon his knees and implored the officer to spare his child.

"Now mark ye," said the officer, and it was an answer to all that could be possibly said, "the king has sent me to bring this damsel to him, and when some one more powerful than the king shall interfere, I may listen."

"Then listen to the voice of God!" cried Zillah. "O, carry me not to the royal palace!"

"But you are not God, nor does he speak through you, for our king is God's most faithful servant. Come, and let me have no cause to give you bodily pain, for the king's orders must be obeyed."

As the officer thus spoke, he seized the maiden by the arm and raised her to her feet, and then calling his companions to his assistance, they raised her from her feet and bore her towards the mouth of the cave.

"Father! father!—O, my father!" Zillah cried, in agonizing accents. "Save me! save me!"

Zak Turan sprang forward and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the officer, but hardly had he done so when he received a blow upon the

head that laid him prostrate upon the hard rock, and while Rudabah sprang to the assistance of her husband, Zillah was borne from the place. As soon as the soldiers reached the level ground outside the cave they formed a sort of litter of their spears, upon which they placed their own outer garments and then laid their prize upon them. Four of the stoutest men shouldered the litter thus provided, and then the party set forward at a brisk walk. Zillah said no more, for she knew it would be useless, and the only sounds that issued from her lips were the deep groans of anguish that she could not keep back. She was truly miserable now.

The clouds which had been gathering thick and black in the heavens now hung over the earth like a suspended ocean, and ere long great drops of rain began to descend and patter upon the earth. The soldiers stopped and set the litter down, and having taken some of the garments upon which Zillah was lying they placed them over her, and having covered her up as well as they could, they resumed their march at a quickened pace.

Ere long the rain came down in torrents, and the spirit of darkness brooded over the earth more powerfully than before. Those who bore the litter could now hardly see the ground upon which they trod, and but for the faint reflection of the raindrops they would have been in a gloom as dark as chaos itself. Yet they kept on, for they had now reached that part of the city where their duty often called them, and they had an instinctive sense of the proper course. The officer walked in advance, and ever and anon he would stop to listen in order to hear if his followers were upon his track, and several times when he did thus, his first assurance of the proximity of the soldiers was given by their running against him.

And all this while poor Zillah was drenched to the skin, and the chilling grasp of the storm had sank its touch to her very heart. She was very cold, and her frame shook as with a spasm. Once she begged her abductors to find some shelter. They held a momentary consultation, but they did not stop.

But the journey was to have an end, and at length the royal palace was reached, and the soldiers soon gave up their charge to the king's trusty eunuchs, who conveyed Zillah to a comfortable apartment, where attendants of her own sex were found to wait upon her.

The king slept and the eunuchs chose not to

awaken him. They resolved to let the news keep for him until morning, and in the meantime to have Zillah restored to a condition of rest and comfort.

The women into whose hands the poor maiden was now given, saw that she was chilled by her recent exposure, and they quickly concocted a restoring cordial, and then placed her in a warm bed. Her exhausted system sank under the influence of the cordial and the wooing bed; and she soon slept. Luckily for her, she was so utterly exhausted that she could not dream, and she passed some hours of sweet, refreshing sleep.

When Zillah awoke she found that the storm had passed away, and that the sun was shining brightly through the lattice near her bed. It was sometime before she could fully realize what had passed, and it was not until she saw several strange, black faces about her bed that she remembered whither she had been carried the night before.

"Will our noble lady dress?" asked one of the female slaves, deferentially.

Zillah started up at the sound of these words, for they conveyed to her mind in an instant the whole startling truth. None but a favorite of the king's would be addressed thus!

"Who are ye?" the poor girl gasped, hardly knowing what she said.

"We are sent to serve thee. And," continued one who had a pleasant cast of features, albeit they were black and coarse, "we have heard something of thy story, and would advise thee for thy good. Dress as we shall direct, and receive the king."

Zillah lay back upon her pillow, and for some moments she pondered upon her situation. She was not without a fair share of personal courage save when brute force was brought against her, for from this she shrank in terror. She saw that she had better not commence by utter obstinacy, and soon she arose from her bed and allowed herself to be dressed. She was at first dazzled by the gorgeous apparel they put upon her. The rich stuffs of gold cloth, the sparkling jewels, the flowing robe of spotless silk, the redolent perfumes and the softly gleaming pearls that went last upon her pure white brow, all seemed for a while to enchain her senses in bewilderment. But there was no pride, no joy, in the sensation, for she felt herself to be but as the gaudily bedecked lamb that is prepared for the sacrifice.

When all this was done—when the maiden

was thus prepared—she was led from the sleeping apartment out through a long corridor, and finally into a room which surpassed in magnificence anything of which she had ever conceived. It was a spacious place, with a floor of mosaic marble, laid in tiny bits of various colors, so as to represent pictures of various kinds, while in the centre played a fountain of sparkling water. The roof was supported by marble pillars, back of which hung a tapestry of gold cloth on three sides, while on the fourth the scene opened upon a garden of most beautiful shrubs and flowers. The seats in the apartment, which were of rich fabric sumptuously draped and stuffed with down, were supported upon small lions of gold, and all the other furniture and trappings were equally rich and costly.

Here Zillah was left alone. She did not notice the slight pain that had crept into her head, for the excitement of the occasion overcame all that. She had been alone only a few moments when a section of the tapestry was drawn aside, and in a moment more the king appeared before her.

Sohrab stopped when he had gained a position in front of the maiden, and gazed upon her with a rapture almost approaching delirium. Never before had she looked more beautiful. There was a flush upon her cheeks outvieing the very roses that crept up about the columns of the garden, and in her eyes shone a light that might hold wager with the stars.

"Zillah," spoke the king, at length, "heaven seems all crowded into this one moment of my life. O, most lovely of thy sex, thou knowest not what pangs I have suffered with the fear that I might lose thee, nor can tongue tell the joy that at this moment pervades my senses when I find that thou art truly mine."

"*Thine!*" uttered the maiden, in a shrill, trembling whisper.

"Ay—for thou art surely mine now, and thou shalt find how truly a king can love."

"Then you do love me?"

"Love thee? O, with my very life. To thy slightest wish shall half my kingdom be subject."

"Then," murmured Zillah, sinking quickly down upon her knees, "give to me my liberty and let me go my way. O, what can be more easy for you to do than this?"

The king's countenance changed.

"You should not ask that," he said.

"But it is the prayer of my heart."

"And yet I cannot grant it, for it would break my own heart to do so. No, no—you will not persist in such a demand."

Zillah arose to her feet and stood before the king. She looked upon him, and she saw a man who had reached the downhill of life, whose head already bore the frost of years in silver touches laid on thick and white, and whose face showed the marks of the libertine and the debauchee. She at first would have shrunk from the monarch with fear and loathing, but a sense of the wrong that had been heaped upon her gave her courage, and the regal station of her oppressor gave him an importance that might not be passed over with mere disdain. She remembered how he had stolen in upon the sanctity of her home, and had even abused the holy boon of charity to the fatal injury of those who bestowed it. Then she remembered how he had sent to seize her—how he had even sent messengers of death upon the man who would have protected her. These thoughts passed quickly, yet vividly, through her mind; and then she thought of what must be the *will* of such a man. Next she dwelt upon his *power*, and the picture was not promising of joy to her.

"Sire!" she said, returning the king's look with one of the deepest agony, "you will not keep me here against my will—you will not force me to remain with you, when you are assured that each moment of my sojourn beneath this roof is a dagger of death to my soul. O, you are a powerful king, and I but one of the meanest of your subjects."

"Hold! Zillah! You are not so. You are not my subject—you are mistress of my heart, keeper of my affections, and ruler of my joy."

"Say not so, sire!"

"But it is the truth. Your fate is wrapped up in the same sphere with mine own. You are mine—mine to love and to adore."

Zillah sank back upon her seat once more and buried her face in her hands, and while she sat thus the king seated himself beside her and passed his arm around her neck. She felt the touch—she felt the hot breath strike her face—and, in a moment more she felt his lips sealed upon her cheek. This broke the spell. This startled the maiden back to life, and she felt her whole soul take fire with indignation and contempt. With a quick, energetic movement she sprang from the royal embrace, and then with her hands clasped before her she cried:

"Touch me not again! Your embrace is

worse than death a thousand times. Kill me if you will, but touch me not!"

"Beware, Zillah!" uttered Sohrab, turning pale and trembling. "Beware how you excite me to wrath!"

"Did I not tell thee, king, that I would rather die than suffer your coals upon her heart, and his face showed that he meant all he said. She knew his power; she knew that no Feridoon could save her now, and under the emotions thus brought up she might have sank senseless down had not one of the black eunuchs at that moment made his appearance.

"Ay—but ye shall have both. I'll love thee—I'll make thee my wife—and then I'll hate thee as I would a toad!"

Zillah shrank away from the king, for his words fell like hot coals upon her heart, and his face showed that he meant all he said. She knew his power; she knew that no Feridoon could save her now, and under the emotions thus brought up she might have sank senseless down had not one of the black eunuchs at that moment made his appearance.

"How now, slave?" cried Sohrab.

"The satraps and the judges are arrived, and the people clamor for audience, sire."

"Go tell them I will be with them anon."

The slave disappeared, and as soon as he was gone, the monarch turned to Zillah. His face had assumed an iron firmness, and his eyes gleamed with a strange fire, seeming half exultation, with some wrath and a touch of hatred. He raised his finger towards the maiden, until it pointed directly into her face, and then he said, in a low, hissing tone, but with measured accents:

"Zillah, the duties of my office call me now to the throne, but I shall return to you. This night, when you retire, you will be my wife. Do you hear me!"

Zillah hesitated for one moment, and then she sprang forward and sank down at the monarch's feet, with her clasped hands raised towards him.

"Sire!" she cried, "O, for the love of heaven, release me from this place. I cannot love you as a husband, for my heart is another's; but let me go—let me depart in purity and peace—and as my king I will love you always and pray for you with every prayer of my heart."

"So, so, pretty one—you look most beautiful now at my feet."

"Answer me, sire! O, answer me, and when you speak—remember that God looks down upon us."

"I choose not to trouble myself with anything above the earth at this present time," was the king's cold reply. "But listen—I saw you and loved you, for you were the most beautiful being upon whom my eyes had ever rested. I resolved that you should be mine, and I sent for you, little dreaming that any one would dare resist the orders of the king. You know that I have had some trouble in obtaining you, but you are here at length, and my wish is gratified. Now you may be my wife, and be among the happiest of the happy, with every wish cared for and every whim, even, regarded; or you may be my wife and be as miserable as you choose—for my wife you shall be, even though death stood by your side, and I had to embrace you both together! Now you have had an answer to all your questions and all your prayers."

Zillah arose and walked slowly to the seat where she had before rested, and with a deep groan she sank down upon it. The king gazed at her a moment in silence, and then he said:

"Remember—I shall be with you anon, and you must love me. The miser shall, unasked, give all his store in noble charity ere I give up thee! The doting mother, in her own right mind, shall give her darling infant to feed the dogs, ere I give one claim of mine upon thee away! Thou art mine—mine to share my bed, and my love if you will."

When Zillah next looked up she was alone. The words she had heard rang wildly in her ears, and her heart throbbed painfully in her bosom. She gazed upon the gaudy tapestry which was still in motion from the king's touch, and her brain commenced to reel. She remembered how the persecutor had looked—how his eyes had gleamed, his teeth grated and his face paled, and a faintness gathered about her heart. She walked to the open balcony that looked out upon the garden, but she noticed not the fragrance of the zephyrs that came up from the thousand bursting roses and aromatic shrubs. She went to the fountain and bathed her brow in the cool water, for she felt a strange oppression there—a close, confined sensation, accompanied by a burning heat. She felt her steps tottering—she knew that her strength was leaving her, and she had just time to reach her seat once more, when the last spark of consciousness went out, and she sank down faint and insensible.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MOST STARTLING INTERVIEW.

WHEN Zak Turan and his wife were left alone with their serving man, they were in a state of bewilderment for a while, that almost shut out the realization of pain. Rudabah first hastened to the assistance of her husband, but she found that he had not been hurt, only slightly stunned by the blow he had received. As soon as they were really capable of calm reflection, Zak Turan resolved to hasten away at once and hunt up Kobad. Accordingly he left his wife and slave in charge of the cave, and made his way out, bidding them, ere he left, to keep the inner door fastened and not to open it save to those whom they knew to be friends.

Shortly after the cobbler left the cave the rain began to fall, but he noticed it not. He only hastened on as before, for he had started at a speed as swift as he could maintain. His first stopping place was the palace of the satrap Rustem, for he naturally concluded that the sage would have stopped with Feridoon. At the gate he found a slave sleeping beneath the shelter of an arch, and of him he inquired if the astrologer was within. The slave said no.

"And has Feridoon returned?"

"Yes."

"And are you sure that an old man did not come with him?"

"Don't know," returned the slave, rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"Then will you find out?"

"Not now. If you want to inform yourself upon such matters you had better present yourself at some seasonable hour. Now go away before we lock you up for disturbing the peace at this unseemly time."

The cobbler was afraid of the guard of the powerful satrap, and he dared not offend him; yet he resolved to make one more trial, for he had an impression that Kobad was there.

"Hark ye!" he said. "If Feridoon learns not the intelligence I have to communicate, his misery for life may be sealed. But I would rather the old astrologer should know it first, for he may have some means of helping the matter without alarming the youth."

"You are deceiving me?"

"I am not. The young man's happiness depends upon the success of my mission. One whom he loves is in danger."

"Do you mean the damsel?"

"Ay; I mean Zillah; my own child."

"Eh? You, you the father of our young master's love?"

"Yes. I am Zak Turan."

"And why didn't you say so? By my life of lives, had I known that, I'd let you pass even though the satrap himself bade me not. Hold a moment, and I'll call a slave to conduct you."

As the fellow thus spoke he stepped back into

the court, and in a few moments he returned with another slave.

"Hist! say nothing that I slumbered; for the rain kept me in, and my lids were heavy. They drooped against my express wishes."

"Fear not," returned the cobbler. "I am not prone that way."

Zak Turan now followed his new guide, and ere long he reached Feridoon's apartments. Here they found a slave awake, and from him they learned that Kobad was there. The cobbler at once went to his bedside and awoke him, and then told him all that had happened. At first the old man would hardly believe it. He rubbed his eyes and seemed to doubt the reality of his being awake, but he soon satisfied himself upon this point, and then he made Zak Turan tell the story over again. When he had heard the startling tale repeated, and had realized it all, he leaped from his bed and caught the cobbler by the hand.

"You are Zak Turan," he muttered, half to himself, "and you surely know what has happened."

Then he sat down upon a stool, and after reflecting for some moments, he added:

"I see how it must have been: we were followed. Those eunuchs are witty men, and they overcame our precautions. But hark ye; say nothing yet of this to Feridoon. Did he know it he would rush at once to the royal palace, and that must not be, for surely some arrow or javelin, or some vengeful spear-head would find his life. Sit thee down, Zak Turan, for I must ponder upon this. Of course Zillah will be in no immediate danger to-night, save from the storm, for when she reaches the palace she will be wet and cold, and must have rest. Fear not. I will ponder well, and you may be assured that my thoughts shall be to some purpose."

For some time the old astrologer remained with his head bowed upon his hands, but at length he started up and commenced to pace the room. Once he stopped and clasped his hands together vehemently and then walked on again.

"I must do it," he muttered to himself. "I must do it, or all may be lost. I must see him, for no messenger can be sent. O, Sohrab, what a villain thou art!"

He stopped walking as he ceased speaking, and having gazed full into Zak Turan's face for some moments, he continued:

"Rest here, my son, and be assured that our

sweet child can be saved. Yet I would have given much ere I would have had such a thing happen. But I have a power greater than the king. Let not your heart grieve, for Zillah shall be saved."

* * * * *

The king hurried through with his business in the audience chamber, and that day there were some judgments rendered that had but little of deliberation in their rendering. Before noon he had cleared the last case from the docket, and all else that might come in before the proper time of closing the divan, he left for Kanah to dispose of, for he knew that Kanah not only possessed the ability to render judgment, but that most of the people had much confidence in him. As soon as this arrangement was made the king left the great hall and took his own private way to his family apartments. He reached the sumptuous apartment where he had left the maiden, but she was not there. He went and looked out into the garden, but he could not see her there. He was just going to another apartment when one of his female slaves entered his presence.

"Where is Zillah?" he asked, as the slave stopped and bowed low down.

"She has gone to her bed," was the slave's response.

"Gone to her bed?" iterated the king. "And did she know that I should seek her there?"

"She is sorely afflicted, sire."

"Ay; so I feared she would be. But my presence will soon restore her."

"Not so, sire; for she is bereft of reason at times, and her blood lies hot in her veins. After you had gone to audience we found her here upon the floor, and when we had conveyed her to her couch, we at once sent for your physician, and he says that a raging fever is working in her system."

"I will see her," said the king, with something like regret upon his features: and as he spoke he followed the slave out into the corridor beyond, and thence to a spacious apartment, within which was a bed most richly furnished.

Upon this bed reposed the form of Zillah. She seemed to sleep now, and her breath was quick and heavy. Upon her cheek was a deep hectic flush, and her flesh was hot and parched. The king spoke to her, but she did not answer. He laid his hand upon her brow, but she moved not in recognition of his presence.

"Did she rave, said you?" he asked, turning to the slave whom he had met in the other apartment.

"Ay, sire, most strangely, though not with such power as some. She seemed only as though her mind wandered, and her speech was of such a kind as bore no sense nor meaning to us."

"Now, by my life," cried the monarch, bringing his hands together, "she talked the same with me, and I did not think of her being lost in mind. And yet, had I reflected, I might have seen that her mind was not her own then. But let her be cared for, and the physician shall answer for her life with his own. By my life, if her breath goes out in death, then all who have to do with the medications of her disease shall die with her!"

Sohrab stooped over and kissed the maiden's pure white brow, and then he turned away from the apartment. He stopped at the door, and having once more informed his slaves that their own lives should be answerable for the sure recovery of the invalid, he went away. When he reached the great chamber of the garden, where he had first met Zillah, he stopped and gazed out upon the flowers that were sending their aromatic breath up so sweetly into the palace. He stood leaning against one of the marble pillars, and while there he cursed his fate that the beautiful object of his love should be thus held from him even after he had her within his power. He was just upon the point of turning away when a movement of the arras caught his eye, and upon looking that way he observed a human figure step from behind the heavy hangings into the room.

This new comer was an old man, bent by age, with a head as white as snow from the frost of years, and whose uncut beard flowed down to his breast like a sheen of silver. The reader will at once recognize Kobad, the astrologer, but the king knew him not by sight, though, as we already know, he had often heard of him, and that, too, lately, in connection with events of not the most pleasing sound to royal ears.

"Now whom have we here?" uttered the king, part in anger and part in surprise—surprised that the intruder should have made his way to these private apartments unannounced, and angry that he should have been allowed so to do.

"One who has come to see the king," answered the old man, boldly.

"Then you have wandered from your path. The king should have been seen an hour ago, in the royal audience chamber."

"But that which I would speak the king alone should hear; and hence have I sought him here."

"And how gained you admittance?"

"The same as does your majesty, I suppose. As good fortune would have it, I stumbled directly upon the way that led hither."

"But wherefore come ye?"

"Concerning a maiden named Zillah, the child of a poor cobbler, whom some graceless villains did seize last night and bear away; and to your majesty come I now for justice."

"And do ye know who seized the maiden?" asked the king, biting his lips.

"I only know that they were soldiers, and, if I have been informed correctly, they wore the uniform of one of the royal squadrons. Does the king know anything of this?"

There was something so patriarchal in the look, the tone and the bearing of the aged man, that Sohrab was constrained to listen, and when he would have called for his attendants he felt a secret, strange forewarning that he had better not.

"Do you know that you now speak with the king?"

"I know it well."

"Then methinks you speak freely."

"So that I may be the better understood. I would know if you can tell me of this maiden?"

"Suppose I were to tell thee that she is now in my palace?"

"Then I should believe thee."

"She is."

"I knew it."

"Ha! You tamper with me then!"

"I would hear the truth from thy own lips. But what intent have you in this movement? What will you do with the girl?"

"She is for my wife."

"But she already loves another, and is beloved in return. You will not force her to become the partner of your chamber?"

"Look ye!" cried the king, and his face flushed with anger. "You are an old man and I have heard thee speak, but I'll listen no more. Depart now in peace, or run the risk of such punishment as you may deserve. Out, I say!"

"Hold a moment, king. I have not come here merely to banter you, or to make a bargain of words. I have come to warn you; and let

me assure you that you had better wind your body round with sackcloth, and bury thy head in dust and ashes, than persist in this design upon the maiden of whom we speak. If she is now here—"

"She is here, and here she shall remain!" interrupted the king.

"I know she's here," quickly answered Kobad, "and that she must remain here for a time, for the brutal treatment she last night received has made her sick. But, king of Persia, listen to me. Better hadst thou kneel down now and give thy life quietly up, than to do the thing thou hast planned, for the moment that sees the pure and lovely Zillah seduced to thy foul will, shall see this kingdom shake to its very centre! Dost hear me?"

At first the king could not answer, for he was strangely moved. It was not all anger, nor was it all fear. It was a strange mingling of emotions that stirred up his feelings, and wonder held a prominent place among them. But the idea of kingly dignity and power soon came to help him, and clapping his hands quickly together, he called for his attendants. In a few moments six eunuchs entered. They came in by a point close at Kobad's side, and as they bowed in the royal presence the old astrologer turned full upon them, and with a lofty wave of the hand, he said:

"You are not wanted now. Retire, and hold yourselves in readiness."

The eunuchs immediately turned from the apartment, and before the astounded king could call them back they were gone.

"Now, Sohrab, listen to me," said the strange old man. "I have at the present moment come to serve thee, though I will not so far speak rank falsehood as to say that for thine own weal I care one jot. 'Tis for Zillah that I care, and you shall not harm her, nor shall you take her as your wife. She is sick now, and cannot be with safety moved, but you shall not harm her."

"Now, by the God of my creation!" cried the king, starting back, and drawing his sword, "you shall die for this. Never before was king so insulted by a hireling slave!"

"'Tis I that have been insulted by hireling slaves!" calmly returned the old man, at the same time opening his robe and drawing forth a heavy blade. "Had I known the damsel was so sick, I might not have come to-day, but it is well that I am here. And now I ask thee once

in earnest—wilt thou give the fair Zillah up when she has recovered?"

"No!" whispered the king, hoarsely and spasmodically. His face was of a livid hue, and his hands were clutched till the very blood seemed to harden in them. "By the faith of my fathers, I'll have thee killed by inches, and the four quarters of my city shall each bear upon its highest tower a quarter of thy rebel body!"

Kobad moved nearer to the king and gazed steadily and calmly in his face, and in a low, meaning tone, while each word seemed laden with more than human import, he said:

"Sohrab, the people of your own kingdom already cry out against you, and your sins are not only known, but they are felt and suffered. All over Persepolis have flown the tidings of your conduct towards this poor girl. True, you are a king, and have the right to rule, but you should know how *tyrants* are looked upon, and how the people sometimes use them. You are a doomed man if you do not turn from your present course, and just so sure as you lay a finger of harm upon Zillah, or force her to one concession beyond her full and glad consent, as surely shall your death follow it. I have read the stars, and even now, at noonday, they look down angrily upon thee."

"Ha!" uttered the monarch, starting from his entrancement, and clenching his hands, as he heard the last words, "you are *Kobad*, the *astrologer of Arabia*!"

"Ay—king."

"And you are the arch traitor who has already been stirring up my people. Well may ye warn me of their vengeance when you yourself set them on."

"Didst say I was the arch traitor?" asked Kobad, moving nearer to the monarch, and gazing more fixedly in his face.

The king was upon the point of clapping his hands again, when he caught more clearly the expression of the astrologer's dark hazel eye. There was a strange gleam in that eye, and well might any man be moved by it, but upon Sohrab its influence was marvellous. He first bent eagerly forward and then he started back. Soon there came a bitter, lowering smile curling about his eyes, and the king clasped his hands above his brow as though a sudden pain had seized him there.

"Sohrab, look upon me more carefully. Gaze more keenly upon me, and see what you find in my face. *Is not there something in the stars?*"

"—sh!" whispered the king, turning pale as death, and at the same time putting forth one hand and feeling the flesh of Kobad's arm. "You dare not come here if you are—. But it cannot be. Some demoniac skill of thine works upon me thus."

"Mayhap it is, Sohrab. But listen now. You know that this maiden whom you have forced hither to your palace is beloved by another, do you not?"

But the king did not answer. He only gazed fixedly into the old man's face. And Kobad continued:

"You did know that she was beloved by Feridoon. And now you would rob the youth of his more than life. King, you have seen the youth of the Lion Heart—do ye dream who he is?"

"Ay!—*I know!*" cried Sohrab.

"Ah, then you have read the story in his face. You see in him the keen black eye and the noble, lofty brow of his father. Now do you know what became of that father?"

"The robbers of the desert killed him!" gasped the king.

"*They did not!*" whispered Kobad.

"They did!" whispered the monarch, in reply.

"Sohrab," spoke the astrologer, slowly and calmly, "when Kei Khosrou, our beloved king, died in this palace, you resolved to be king in his place, and while that royal corse lay exposed here to the gaze of the people, you heard that the noble Gushtasp was returning to pay his last tribute of love to the remains of his beloved monarch. You feared Gushtasp, for you knew that the people loved him more than they did yourself. So you sent out a party of your slaves to murder him ere he should reach the city. Those slaves did their duty too faithfully. They murdered the noble general, and when they returned, you poisoned them every one so that your secret might be safe. You stood over the cold corse of Gushtasp—you gazed into his noble, generous features, noble yet in death—and you knew that the cruel gash that had let his life-blood out, was of your own making! And yet you did not repent of your crime, for I saw you then—I saw you as you bent over the body of my best friend—"

"You saw me!" shrieked the king. "Your best friend!"

"Ay, Sohrab, the noble Gushtasp was my friend, and I wept when I saw him dead—and even then I knew that it was you who had killed

him. Suppose the Lion Heart knew 't was you who killed his father!"

"Out, monster! devil! sprite! afrite! infernal ghoul! Out, I say!" shrieked the king, glaring wildly at the old astrologer. "You have taken a form from the other world, and now put it on to oppose me with. You lie in my face when you say 'twas I who killed Gushtasp."

"I do not lie, king. Before God I do most solemnly swear that your slaves murdered the noble Gushtasp—that 'twas by your orders done, and that he died that you might be king. And—listen—" here the old man's voice sank to a terrible whisper—"there was another whom you meant should die! another against whom your hand was raised—and now it was your own hand—not the hand of a slave, but you yourself meant to strike the blow. Do you remember? Look at me, Sohrab. *Do you remember?*"

The king could bear no more. With one wild movement he clapped his hands together, and gave one frenzied cry for his slaves.

"Beware, Sohrab!" spoke Kobad, hurriedly, but distinctly. "Let one movement of yours bring a tear to Zillah's eye, and every soul in Persia shall know what I know!"

He ceased speaking just as the slaves rushed into the apartment, and as they entered he raised the heavy tapestry and disappeared.

"What ho! here—slaves! dogs! seize that old dotard and bind and gag him! Gag him quickly, and let his mouth be stopped!"

The slaves had seen the old man pass out on the instant before, and they expected to raise the arras and lay their hands directly upon him; but they were mistaken. They sprang around the marble pillars and raised the tapestry, but nothing of the man they sought was to be found. There were four passages leading from the corridor that was bounded by the arras, and into each of these passages sprang a slave.

Ere 'long the eunuchs returned to the king and reported that the old man could not be found.

"Not find him?" yelled Sohrab, starting back and gazing into the face of the slave that had spoken.

"Not in the palace, sire."

"But he must be here!"

"He is a *genie*!" uttered one of the oldest of the eunuchs; "and he has gone off in the air. How could he escape, when each passage is guarded at the other end? The slaves there

know that he has not passed. He may be in this very room even now!"

"In here?" gasped the king, starting as though he had heard the call of the death-angel, and at the same time gazing nervously about him. "He is not here!"

"I meant that he might be here," returned the eunuch. "Genii can go where they please without being seen, you know, for they can change themselves into thin air."

The king gazed into the face of his slave, and gradually he moved towards him until he could lay his hand upon his arm. All this while he was very pale and his step was tottering and unsteady.

"Bahboul," the monarch whispered, "did you see that man?"

"Yes, sire—when you called us in before, and he ordered us to retire."

"Ay—and did you note his face—his eyes—those deep eyes of lustrous hazel?"

"Ha!" So the old slave uttered, and his black face began to work strangely.

"Did you note his face, I say?" gasped Sohrab.

"I did! I did! I remember now. O, my master, did I not tell thee he was a genie?"

"Is he? By my life, Bahboul, if you'll convince me that that man was truly a genie, who

only assumed that form in which to visit earth, I'll make you happy for the rest of life."

"I cannot make sure, sire; but you should know how he spoke. Did he speak like one of earth?"

The king bowed his head once more, and he was deeply troubled. It was a moment to him of perplexing and agonizing thought; but in the end he murmured, in a low, sad, painful tone:

"Leave me, Bahboul, and make search through the palace. Start up the guards—all of them—and let not a corner where a mouse might hide be missed. Be quick, now—and mind that the old man is gagged the moment he is taken. Away."

When Sohrab was left alone, he threw himself upon a seat and buried his face in his hands. He muttered incoherent sentences to himself, and ever and anon he would start up and gaze about him as though he had heard some frightful sound. In an hour his slaves returned with the intelligence that the old man was not to be found. Every place had been searched, but no traces of him could be discovered.

The king once more tried to calm himself, by believing that his strange visitor was not a human being.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOMELESS.

WHEN Feridoon first heard of the stroke of fate which had fallen upon Zillah, he was beside himself with rage and grief, and but for the earnest appeals and assurances of the astrologer, he would have gone at once to the royal palace and attempted her liberation.

"She shall be saved," said Kobad, "for though the king has her now in his power, yet he will not dare to harm her."

"But such a villain dares anything," returned Feridoon. "It is a trait of cowardly character, that the individual may be sometimes led by his wicked passions to do that which in another would require a vast amount of courage."

"Ay, my son, unless you can work upon the fears powerfully enough to restrain them. Now I know that the king would sooner have his good right hand cut off, and his body buried in leprosy, than do harm to Zillah. I have seen the foul monarch, and I have left him with a cue from which he will not depart."

"But how?"

"I know of a most foul murder he once committed—the murder of a man whom the people most fondly loved—and I told him of it; and I told him, too, that if he did harm to Zillah all men should know his sins. Be sure he would not have those sins known for all the wives earth can give."

"But how long ere I can see my love?"

"I cannot tell. She may not recover from her sickness before the lapse of a week. But be sure you shall see her, and in health and purity."

It was difficult for the youth to restrain himself, but when he came at length to see that his interference now might cause Zillah's malady to assume a more dangerous phase, he concluded to let her remain where she was, and to trust the word of his friend. After this he went away, for he had much to do, and Feridoon was left alone. It was now near evening on the day following the visit of Kobad to the royal palace.

Our hero had been alone only some ten minutes, when Rustem entered. Of late the satrap had said but little to his protege, for he felt somewhat angry at what had passed. The old noble came in and sat down, and for some time he regarded the youth in silence. At length he said:

"Feridoon, I have done much for you, and to me you surely owe the manhood you now possess."

"I owe you much, my father, and deeply do I feel it," returned the youth, sincerely.

"Then you should obey me now."

"In all things reasonable, my father."

"Ay, and you should let me be the judge of what is right."

"Look ye, noble sir," spoke Feridoon, promptly and energetically, "if I am to feel grateful for the manhood you have given me, of course it must be because I find joy in exercising the powers your gifts have bestowed upon me. But if you are still to do my thinking—if you are to judge of what is right for me, then what benefit results to me from your favor?"

"Listen, my son. The king demands that you shall relinquish your claim upon the love of the cobbler's daughter; that you shall write to her and say you can love her no more, and that you shall also bid her, if she still loves you, to turn all her faith to the king; that she shall be his wife, and be loving and faithful unto him."

"Did the king make such a demand?" uttered the youth, starting up.

"He did."

"And what said you in return?"

"That I would do his bidding."

"O—and does Sohrab think us all fools? By my life, I would sooner bury my dagger deep within my own heart than prove myself such a villanous coward! But much sooner would I put my weapon's point to his dastard heart—and so you may tell him!"

For a moment there was a flush of anger upon the satrap's cheek, but it soon passed away, and an expression of earnest, eager imploring took its place.

"My son," he resumed, "that is not all the king said. He also swore most solemnly that if you did not his bidding he would take your life!"

"Take my life? By the laws of Persia and the sacred creed of God, he dare not!"

"But he can do it quickly. You have opposed his authority and killed his servants. Remember, my son, that sixty-nine of his soldiers have fallen by your hand, and that, too, while they were lawfully obeying their royal master."

"You know how they were obeying and what they were obeying."

"I know all that, my son, but we must remember that our laws know nothing about it. I have read the laws of our nation many times, for I have helped administer them during many years, and I know that the king, or any other person, has but to accuse you, to compass your death. Be sure your life is forfeited by our laws. Only look at it, Feridoon. Suppose every man could do as you have done, with impunity, simply because he judged the mission unjust in

which those were engaged whom he slew. You see what a state of things would exist."

"I understand you," answered Feridoon, calmly. "But I have one criterion now, that to me, at least, appears just. I can look calmly to heaven and bare my heart to God, that he may see all that it contains. I have no sorrow for what I have done, save that I mourn for those misguided men who fell beneath my arm, and I would suffer much could I bring them back to life."

"But do you realize, my son, that your death is sure to follow this obstinacy? If you do not as the king has commanded, you are sure to die."

"If," quickly added the youth, "he can do that thing."

"Of course the king can do his will."

"Very well. Now here is my answer. Not for all the favors kings can bestow, nor in fear of all the penalties they can inflict, will I give up one iota of my claim upon the love of Zillah; and this is my reason. Every principle of right and justice gives her to me, and the will of the king is nothing but black and rank wickedness, to the commands of which I will never submit. I am in the path of honor and virtue, and I shall stake my life for its maintenance. If the king can take it, it is his; but he must be a wonderful man if he can take it."

Rustem started back in his seat, for the youth had risen as he spoke the last sentence, and there was something so superbly grand in his very appearance that the satrap was for the moment awe-struck. But all this soon passed, for there was a stern reality staring him in the face, of which he had not yet spoken, and that weighed heavily upon his mind with more power than could all the ideas of which the youth had spoken. He made known that idea as follows:

"If you turn a deaf ear to all this, then listen while I speak one other thing: the king has also sworn that *I shall die* if you do not do as he has asked!"

"Is this true?"

"Most true."

"But the king does not mean it."

"I know he does."

"He dares not do such a thing!"

"I tell you he dares do anything. Now will you see your father die?"

"Not if I can help it. I will protect you with the last movement of my strength, and for your sake I will brave death itself."

"And you will give up this wild passion your heart has held?"

"Do you mean my love for Zillah?"

"Yes."

Feridoon did not reply at once. He arose from his chair, and paced to and fro across the room several times ere he spoke; and when he did speak, his voice was very low but yet very firm and decided.

"I wish that you might escape this affair, for no blame can be attached to you even by the king. But this last movement shows him to be worse in disposition and intent than we had even painted him. But I will not give up to him."

"Not to save my life?"

"Would you have me do it?" asked the youth, with startling energy, as he moved quickly forward and placed his hand on the satrap's arm.

"I would not die," answered Rustem.

"Nor would I sell my soul to a wicked king for the life of any man," promptly returned Feridoon. "What shall be your joy henceforth when you realize that hereafter every breath you draw is but the remembrancer of another's woe? I am sorry. I will lay down my life for you, but I will not sell my own soul. So you may tell the king."

"And is this your final answer?"

"It is, most surely."

Rustem arose, and there was anger and chagrin upon his features. He could hate as strongly as he could love, and his heart could turn its tide of affection into a stream of gall at a provocation that aimed itself at his self-love. He spoke not another word, but with a flashing eye and a frowning brow, he strode from the apartment.

When Feridoon was left alone he reflected upon what had passed. He knew the temper of Rustem, and he knew that there was much love of self above all other things in his composition. And he remembered, too, how wickedly the king had acted, and he was resolved that he would not bow to such a villain in the dust of shame and agony. So he repented not of what had passed.

The evening advanced and the shades of night were gathered about the great city. The candles had been lighted in Feridoon's apartments, and he was engaged in reading a manuscript that belonged to Rustem, when a slave entered bearing a slip of parchment in his hand, which he handed to the youth. The latter took it and read, and when he had finished he started up to

speak with the slave who had brought it, but he was gone.

Feridoon ran his eyes over the document once more, and then a grim smile rested upon his features. It ran as follows:

"TO FERIDOON, of the *Lion Heart*:

"I wish not to recount what has transpired, knowing full well that no words of mine can make it plainer to you than it now must be. But my house can no longer be your home—my roof can no longer cover you. If you cannot find it in your heart to comply with the commands I have laid upon you from the king, then must you find another home. I wish not to see you again unless you come to obey. Go your way and act your own pleasure, and remember that henceforth you are no child or friend of mine.

RUSTEM."

Feridoon rolled up the parchment and placed it in his pocket, and then he called his slaves to him and informed them that he was going out. He would not tell them where he was going, nor how long he meant to remain—he only told them he was going away, and he bade them to remain behind. After this, he dressed himself in a plain suit, taking the precaution to put on a light, firm shirt of mail which had been furnished for him when he received his lessons in warfare. What money really belonged to him he took, and then, with his faithful sword and dagger, he departed. He did not stop until he reached a point where a view of Rustem's palace was cut off, but when he had gained this he slackened his pace and finally halted.

It was now quite dark, the night having fairly set in, and there being no moon. A sense of loneliness crept over Feridoon's soul, for he was like a stranger in the great city. For Kobad he knew not where to look. Zillah was in the royal palace, and who should tell where good Zak Turan might be? At length, however, he turned his steps to the house where the honest cobbler was wont to dwell, with the faint hope that he might find some one there who could direct him. He reached the house and found four soldiers stationed there.

"How now?" he asked, seeing that they were armed only with swords. "What do ye here?"

"We are watching for the king," replied one of them.

"Watching for the king?"

"At his command, I mean."

"And wherefore?"

"For the purpose of finding one whom the king feareth."

"And who is it?"

"Kobad, he is called, and he is an astrologer."

"Ah—then the king fears him?"

"Ay, verily—for he soweth sedition among the people."

"Is Zak Turan within the house?"

"No, for we seek him, too."

"Ah?"

"Yes. The king wants both him and his wife to come and console a weeping damsel whom he hath taken to his home with him."

"I would have seen the cobbler, but 'tis no matter now," said the youth, as he turned away from the place. He saw that the soldiers did not know him, and he had no desire that they should, so he moved on down the street towards the old sepulchre. He knew not whither he was going, neither did he care. His chief desire was to find the astrologer, but he knew not which way to turn, for he had not the least idea where the old man was.

The youth kept on until he came to the sepul-

chre, which was dug out from the solid cliff, and here he sat down. He gazed up at the frowning front of the place, and in the gloom he could see the quaint sculpture that stood out from its parent rock. Here was the dwelling of the dead, and he thought, as he sat there and viewed the ponderous doors of solid metal, how many mortals had ended their earthly pilgrimage there!

"Ah!" he murmured to himself, "here life's journey ends, and king and slave sleep both alike. The mighty race of kings who sleep here—the renowned Paishdadians—are no more now than the slaves who cringed at their feet! Then how should the man live who would have his name remembered where memory is worth the having? Surely, honor and truth, virtue and justice, must be the properties that shall embalm it."

Thus he pondered for a while, and at length he arose and turned his steps once more towards the city. He felt strong now in his resolution, and he had prayed to God for guidance and counsel. But he had not yet a resting-place, nor did he know whither his steps would bring him.

CHAPTER XV.

DANGERS AND FEARS.

THE satrap heard Feridoon when he left the palace, and though there may have been a slight pang at the thought of thus losing his protege, yet he was too wroth to have it pain him much. Rustem felt that the youth owed to him all the obedience of an own child, and among all the social laws of Persia there was none more binding than the reverence and obedience of parents. Rustem could have borne with Feridoon's first refusal, however, but when he came to refuse to sacrifice his whim (so Rustem called it), to save the life of his protector, his anger could be contained no longer. His heart was wholly estranged now, and he hated the youth as much as he had ever loved him. It was one of the peculiarities of the man.

As soon as Feridoon had gone, the satrap went up to the apartments he had occupied and bade the slaves go and join those below, at the same time telling them that they would serve their late master no more. The poor fellows were really wild with grief when they heard this, but they saw that the satrap was angry and they asked no questions.

When this was done, Rustem prepared to wait upon the king, for Sohrab had demanded to know his success before he slept. He called some of his slaves to attend him, and as speedily as possible he made his way to the royal palace.

He found the king waiting for him in one of the private apartments, which was lighted up by hanging lamps of solid gold.

"Now, Rustem, what luck?" asked the monarch, even before the satrap had fairly let fall the arras behind him.

"It is of no use," returned the visitor, in a fearful tone. "The young man will not comply. I told him all, but it made no impression upon him. I have turned him from my gate, and no more will I give him a home, or even countenance him in any way."

At first the king became angry, but when he learned Rustem had turned the offender from his dwelling he became somewhat appeased, for it conveyed to him the simple idea that the satrap sympathized with him. For some moments the monarch paced up and down the apartment without speaking, and when he did speak he was much calmer than Rustem had dared to hope; but this calmness was the result of deep passion.

"Rustem," he said, "I shall have the youth seized and brought hither, and this time he may be assured he gets not away alive. Not only would I have him bid Zillah accept my love, but I would nip in the bud a plan of rebellion which I am sure he countenances. By my royal head, Rustem," added Sohrab, growing more vehement in speech and gesture, "you dream

not what a cloud is gathering over us. The peace of the city—ay, of the whole country, is endangered. That crazy old astrologer is doing much mischief, and I fear that this Feridoon is leagued with him in his crime. That old man must be found."

"He was in my palace this very evening, sire."

"How? In your palace—this evening?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then, by heaven, why did you not detain him?"

"I knew not of his presence there till he had departed."

"O, God give me power now over him!" exclaimed the monarch, starting across the room and raising the silken arras. "What ho, there! Slaves!"

In a very few moments a dozen slaves came rushing in. They moved more quickly than usual now, for their royal master had become of late very petulant.

"Now, Rustem, which way went the dotard?"

"I know not, sire," returned the satrap; and after a moment's reflection, he added: "but if your majesty means to send out your slaves after him, they might stop at my outer gate, and mayhap my porter can give some further intelligence."

This plan the king resolved to follow, and he at once despatched a hundred of his best soldiers, directing them to divide themselves into ten parties of ten each, and to scour the city all through.

"By my life, Rustem," he said, after the soldiers had gone, "those two rebels shall be brought, dead or alive, and when they come, if they come alive, they shall surely die! I know that they have foul plots on foot, and they shall be stopped in their wicked work. Lend me your aid, for I shall need it. Every true man must now stand by his king, for I tell you the throne of Persia topples now upon its base; and what is Persia when her throne is overturned? There is danger, Rustem! There is treason—rank, foul treason, abroad. Have ye not seen it? By my soul, I can smell it in the very air! There's a phantom about me, howling dire threats in my ear, and airy daggers are aimed at me! Can ye not see them, Rustem?"

During the delivery of this strange speech, the monarch had been walking to and fro, and his manner was vehement and excited. His face was pale and his eyes glared wildly. He stop-

ped, as he ceased speaking, directly in front of the satrap, and gazed him in the face.

"Can ye not see them, Rustem?" he repeated.

The satrap was confounded, and he knew not how to reply. He feared the king's mind was turned—and he was not far from right.

"I was not aware, sire," he at length replied, "of so much danger."

"Were you not? But be sure I am not mistaken. Go now, and let me see you again on the morrow."

"Shall you bring the old astrologer to judgment to-morrow, if he is taken?" asked Rustem.

"Bring him to judgment! Do you mean, shall I bring him to the judgment hall?"

"Yes, sire."

"No! He shall die in his dungeon!"

And so the king meant he should die, for not for half of his kingdom would he have had that old man open his lips before his officers. Not for his own right arm would he have had that old man's face seen by those who might remember him as one they had seen before.

As soon as Sohrab was left alone, he commenced once more to pace the room, for he was in a state of mind bordering on craziness. His heart was torn by wild emotions, and his brain was turned by fearful phantasms. For half an hour he remained thus, and then he left the apartment and entered a long, winding corridor, which was flanked on either hand by marble pillars, and lighted at short intervals by hanging lamps of gold. His way now lay towards the chamber where Zillah was confined. He reached it and entered without ceremony; he found the maiden awake, and the attendant informed him that the physician pronounced her, not only out of danger, but rapidly gaining. The king was pleased with this information, and having ordered the attendant to leave the chamber, he seated himself by the bedside.

Zillah was awake, and a perceptible shudder ran through her frame as she thus found her royal persecutor by her side. But she did not repulse him. She knew that he would not harm her now, and she had presence of mind enough to know that it would be better for her not to exhibit her real feelings, for she was not ignorant of the fact that nothing would more exasperate a man than scorn and disgust from one whom he would conciliate. But she meant not to lie—she did not mean to flatter him by professing any feeling which did not exist in her bosom. She would conceal, but not fabricate.

"Sweet angel," said the king, in a tone as soft and tender as he could command, "you know not how happy this report of your health has made me. I trust the time is not far distant when you shall be yourself once more, and accept the fond and devoted heart I have given you. You will learn to love me, Zillah."

"Alas, sire, my poor love is not worth your seeking."

"Yes it is. By my royal crown, it is worth more than the loves of all other women beside."

"But my heart, I fear, can never learn to love you."

"Say not so. Take back that fear, and commence now to learn the lesson of love. You have loved. Is it not so?"

Zillah gazed up into the monarch's face, and after a moment of doubt she replied:

"Yes, and my heart is no longer mine own."

"You loved the youth called Feridoon?"

"Yes, sire."

"Alas, sweet Zillah, you are not to blame for loving the stout youth, but I know full well that you would never live happily with him. He has a most direful temper, and over it he holds no control. He is not fit to possess so sweet a flower, for he has no shelter to offer thee—not even a roof to cover his own head."

"What mean you, sire?" the maiden asked, in surprise, for the speech of the king had a truthful sound.

"I mean that the youth has no shelter. He is but a beggar in the city."

"Is he not with his father?"

"He is not with Rustem, for the old noble has been obliged to turn him from his gates. His disposition was such that there was no peace in living with him, and the old man was obliged to turn him off. It was hard for the satrap, for he loved the youth well, but he could not put up with his evil and his hardness of heart."

"Hardness of heart, sire?" iterated Zillah, in a sad tone, and about which there seemed to be an air of reproof.

"Ay. Let me tell thee. Feridoon had formed a certain project which came in the end to endanger the satrap's life. Rustem went to him and explained this—told him that his own life was in danger from his, the young man's, plan, and asked him to give it up, and what, think you, was Feridoon's reply?"

"I know not," returned the maiden, trembling.

"It was a decided negative. He utterly refused to comply with his protector's wishes."

"But there must have been some deep principle involved—some idea of right which the youth could not overstep."

"No, not so. It was only a whim of his own—a caprice."

"Will you explain it to me? Tell me what it was he would not give up."

"Really, I cannot now tell, for I was very busy at the time upon another point, and I did not ask; but I think it was something about a female slave that Feridoon had bought. Ha, yes! I remember now," broke forth the king, to whose mind a very handy lie had come—a lie with two edges that might cut both ways. "Yes, yes, I have it now. Feridoon bought a beautiful female of a Caucasian merchant, and afterwards it proved that she had a lover among the merchant's followers. This lover was a powerful, dark man, and he swore that if his beloved was not given up to him, he would murder the satrap, for he imagined that the satrap had the power to give her up if he chose. When Rustem heard of this he was sore afraid, and he went at once to Feridoon and asked him to give up the slave, at the same time stating the danger which threatened him. But the youth turned a deaf ear to all his entreaties. He loved the beautiful slave, and would not give her up."

A sharp, cruel pang shot to poor Zillah's heart as she heard this, and a low, stifled sob broke from her lips.

"O," she at length uttered, rising half up in bed, "this cannot be!"

"It is most true, fair one."

"It cannot be. Feridoon loves no slave girl; he cannot."

"Be not deceived, Zillah. You do not know the man as others know him."

The maiden sank back upon the pillow and closed her eyes. A moment she remained thus, and when she suddenly opened her eyes again upon the king, she saw a look of fiendish triumph just curling about his mouth and eyes. In an instant the conviction went to her soul that Sohrab was lying to her, and she resolved to question him.

"Sire," she said, "when did Feridoon purchase this slave?"

"I do not know."

"But he must have had her some time, if he loves her so well."

"About a week, I believe."

Now Zillah knew that was false, for it was only the day before that Kobad had been with

her, and told her all about Feridoon, and she knew that he had no slave girl then. So her mind was quickly relieved, and she knew that the king was deceiving her; but she said nothing about her conviction.

"And now," resumed Sohrab, "you shall find here a heart that shall be wholly yours. I will love you fondly and truly, and your joy shall be my joy, and your pain my pain. Shall it not be so?"

"Ask me not now, sire. My head aches and my soul is pained. Let me rest now."

"So you shall," cried the king, rising and bending over the sweet, pale face of the invalid. "You may rest now, and ponder upon what I

have said. You must love me, and I know you will. Be sure that I shall make you happy."

He kissed her upon the brow as he ceased speaking, and then left the apartment. He had hopes now and so had Zillah. Kobad had assured her that she should be saved, let the king do his utmost, and she had much confidence in that old man's power to save her, for she had seen enough of his character to know that he never spoke falsely.

Very differently did those two, the king and the maiden, regard the aged astrologer. One feared him with a fear that amounted to almost a deadly power; and the other loved him with a love that amounted to a holy reverence.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER FAILURE, BUT NOT WITHOUT A SUCCESS.

WHILE the king was trying to deceive Zillah into a more favorable regard for himself, three of our acquaintances were together, planning for the future. They were Kobad and the old cobbler and wife, and their place of meeting was in a cave not far from the one in which they were before. This cave in which they now were, was further in among the rocks, and not so spacious nor comfortable as the other. Yet it served well enough for the purpose, for its existence was not known to the soldiers, and its inmates were protected from the inclemencies of the weather.

But these three were not alone. There were three others there—three officers of the government; old men, and holding places of honor and trust. They had been conversing some time and the subject of conversation must have been one of deep interest, for the officers showed by their looks that they were astonished and interested.

"I thought that there must have been foul play," said one of them, "when he was killed. Gushtasp would not have been killed by the robbers on the desert, for all of them knew him and loved him. But how will you prove this to the people?"

"By my word," returned Kobad.

"But the king will not let you speak. He will have you seized and gagged at once."

A strange smile flitted across the astrologer's face, and for a while he gazed down upon the rock at his feet in silence. At length he said:

"Once I had some dealings with our king and he knows me well. My power is too great for him to break. I could perform some things that would make both him and you start and tremble. Sohrab cannot harm me. I am protected by a strange charm which he cannot break. You have heard often of my knowledge, and of my power as a necromancer, but you do not dream how much of that remarkable power I really possess. I do assure you that with one single movement I can so work upon the king that he shall not move except at my bidding."

The three officers regarded each other in silence and surprise. One of them at length moved nearer to the strange man, and in a low tone asked:

"You are sure Gushtasp is dead?"

"Most sure," returned Kobad; and then, with a quiet smile, he added: "you did not imagine that you saw Gushtasp now before you, did you?"

"I did not know who you might be."

"No, no," returned the astrologer, in a sad tone, "there is no such good news. Gashtasp was stabbed to the heart and killed at once. He is now in the home of spirits, where we may all

meet him ere long, for age is creeping upon us apace. But let that pass. Gushtasp is long since dead, and he died by the order of Sohrab, and of that fact the people must soon be apprised. I shall need your co-operation, and in return you may rest assured that no harm shall come to you. We must meet again, and in the meantime, I would have you watch the king."

"We will," answered one of the official trio, "for such as he will bear much watching."

"Ay," added another; "and well would it have been for Persia could he have been watched as he deserved years ago."

"Better late than never," remarked Kobad. "But now our conference is ended and we may return to the city, only remember that we separate before we reach the routes of the royal sentinels."

Having spoken some words of cheer to Zak Turan, the astrologer left the cave in company with the three officers, but ere long they separated, and Kobad pursued his way alone towards that section of the city where stood Rustem's palace. He had proceeded along past the statue of Zal, and was just stepping upon a sort of low curb that was arranged upon the street-side to protect pedestrians from the horses, when he saw some half dozen dusky figures emerge from a street that cornered directly before him. He would have turned back, but the strangers hailed him and he stopped.

"Who are ye? and what do ye want?" asked Kobad.

"We are merely passing about the city as you are," replied one of the party, "and we hailed you because we would know if you had seen one of the king's enemies in your travels."

"I may have seen many," replied the old man, placing his hand upon the hilt of his sword, that he carried beneath his long robe.

By this time the strangers had come more closely up, and Kobad noticed that there were ten of them in all, and that they were gathering about him. He started back towards the nearest house and drew his sword.

"Keep your distance," he said. "I wish not to harm you, but I can allow no familiarity. Do you know who I am?"

"You are one whom we have been sent to take—Kobad."

"Ay—I am; and if you know my power you will not molest me. I use not the weapons you use."

"And yet your sword looks very like ours."

"Does it?" returned the old man, holding the weapon higher up in the starlight. "Perhaps it does. So demons sometimes look like men. But beware how you put my weapon to the test."

The soldiers hesitated as the astrologer put this piece of artifice upon them. They knew him to be a wonderful man, and perhaps he might have some dark power hidden in his sword. They whispered together, and while they did so Kobad blamed himself for having been thus caught at a disadvantage. Had he thought of such a meeting he might have prepared himself with weapons which these men could not have overcome. He had at home a curious powder—a light, airy, imperceptible mixture—that would have struck every man blind who stood about him. A small quantity of it, cast off about him, would float upon the air in all directions, and while he kept his own eyes tightly closed, others would not discover such necessity until they felt the sharp pain in their optics—and then closing the lids would be of no use, for their eyes could be of use to them no more. But the old man had not this thing with him, nor had he anything save just such a sword as any man might carry.

Meanwhile the soldiers had conferred together, and it was resolved that they should make the attempt at least, to capture the rebel, for in that light they viewed him. Two of their number, more bold than the rest, drew off at a short distance, and gradually worked around behind the old man, and at the moment that those in front were beginning to advance, they sprang forward and caught the astrologer by the arms, and in a moment more his sword was wrenched from him.

"Now, old man, what think you?" cried one of the party, in an exultant tone.

"I think that for the while I am your prisoner," Kobad replied, without the least trepidation.

"So ye are."

"You will conduct me to the king, I suppose?"

"Don't know exactly how that'll be."

"How? Am I not arrested by order of the king?"

"Most surely; and you are going to the royal palace, too; but I don't know as the king need to see you."

A sudden fear shot through the old man's bosom as he heard these words. He remembered how the king had been affected by his presence,

and he knew, too, that the king knew his great secret—knew *him*!

"Tell me your orders?" he said, speaking yet calmly, but with an effort.

"We take you to the palace, and deliver you there to the master of the prison; so we must hurry, for the master may be sleepy, and he wont dare to sleep till he hears from us."

Now Kobad knew this master of the prison, and he knew him to be a most ready, unscrupulous tool of Sohrab. He blamed himself more than ever now for having allowed himself to venture forth without protection. To resist his captors would be of no avail, for they were strong men, either one of whom might have overcome him alone.

"Look here," uttered one of the soldiers, "this isn't exactly the thing. Just remember our orders. The old chap wasn't to speak, you know."

"So he wasn't," rejoined the one who seemed to have the lead in the affair. And as he spoke he drew a stout piece of sackcloth from his pocket, and proceeded to bind it over the old man's mouth.

"How now?" the prisoner gasped, putting up his hands to stop this new movement. "Why is this?"

"So ordered the king. We wasn't to let you speak a word."

Kobad resisted this movement, but it mattered little to his captors, for very easily did they bind his hands behind him, and then the cloth was bound tightly over his mouth; and when this was done they took him by the arms and turned their steps in the direction of the royal palace.

The astrologer now felt sure that the king meditated some summary proceedings against him—that in all probability he was to be killed without further ceremony, and the more he pondered upon this the more sure did he feel of it. Surely the king feared him, and would give half his kingdom to see him dead. The inference from this was easily drawn.

For sometime the party kept on without meeting any human being. They had passed Rustem's palace, and were crossing the great square in front of it, when a single human figure was seen crossing towards them. He stopped as they came close to him, and was upon the point of turning one side to let them pass, when a sudden exclamation broke from his lips. It was too dark to recognize countenances, even at a short distance, but the glittering whiteness of the

old astrologer's beard was visible while a face could not be seen at all. The dusky figure from which this exclamation had come moved nearer up and peered with its eyes into Kobad's face.

"Kobad?" it said, interrogatively.

Of course the old man could not reply, but one of the soldiers immediately spoke for him.

"This is Kobad. Now who are you, and what do you want?"

"I want this old man," said the new comer, who seemed to be a youth.

"If you were the king you might have your will, but seeing that you are not, you'll just move out of the way, or we'll take you too."

"Ha! You take him to the king, then? Is that your wish?"

This last question was addressed to the astrologer, and then, for the first time, the intruder seemed to notice the gagging of the mouth.

"Do you want to go with these men?" the youth asked.

The old man shook his head quickly and energetically.

"Here—take this piece of impudence, and let's carry him along, too," cried the leader of the party, turning to his followers.

Half a dozen of the soldiers moved forward at this order, and they were somewhat surprised to see the stranger start back and draw his sword; but more surprise awaited them, for on the next instant he was at them, and as the man nearest to him fell to the earth, he cried:

"Leave this old man to me. I am FERIDOO, of the *Lion Heart*! Give him up and it shall be well with you, but put me to the task and ye shall all fall!"

From the impulse of long habit, the soldiers clung to their prisoner, but the moment they heard that dreaded name they drew Kobad after them.

"Will you make your own deaths?" asked Feridoon, raising his sword.

"Now let not a boy overcome us," cried the soldiers' leader. "Let us show him that our swords are good and our arms strong. He may have swept down men with his club, but our swords are as good—"

Thus far had the leader spoken when a smart blow upon the head from the pommel of Feridoon's sword laid him upon the ground. At this, those who held Kobad let him go and drew their swords. Feridoon saw the movement, and quick as lightning did he sweep his sword about him. His own weapon was heavy and sharp,

and beneath its blows the lighter blades of the soldiers snapped like sun-burnt reeds. They might as well have tried to withstand a hurricane, so rapid and strange were the movements of their adversary. In less than three minutes not one of them had a weapon in his hands, and only two of ten were upon their feet. These two hesitated a moment after their swords were gone, and then they started away across the square.

Feridoon watched them until they were lost in the thick gloom, and then he turned to the old man. First he threw off the gag from his mouth, and then cast off the lashing from his arms.

"Thank fortune!" he murmured, as he threw the cord away, "I came this way most opportunely."

The old man laid his hand upon the youth's head, and with fervent tones he blessed him; and then, as they turned to walk away, he asked:

"But how came you out so late from your home?"

"Home?" repeated Feridoon, in a tone half of sadness and half of bitterness. "I have none."

"But the satrap?"

"Has turned me from his doors."

"When?"

"This very night."

"And for what?"

"Because I would not write a letter to Zillah, and bid her turn her thoughts forever from me and obey the king in his demands."

"And has Rustem become such a tool?" uttered the astrologer, in a tone of regret.

"He did it through fear. The king had promised him to take his life if he did not succeed in bringing me to his purpose. I could not sacrifice my soul to such a cause. I told Rustem I would lay down my life for him, but I would not sell my very heart—my every principle of honor—to the bidding of such villany. Yet I am sorry that Rustem is so situated."

"O, you need not fear for him. The king will not afford to take the satrap's life. If he made such a threat, it was only to spur him up to the work of serving him."

"Hark!" uttered the youth, whose quick ear had caught a sound that Kobad could not yet hear. "There are footsteps coming this way, and quite a number, too."

"Mayhap it is another party in search of me," said the old man, stopping to listen. "I heard those who held me when you came, speak of

other parties which were out upon the search, and this is surely one of them. Let us conceal ourselves somewhere."

Feridoon had no desire to seek a conflict, so he looked quickly about him for a place of concealment. He remembered a place he had just passed, and upon going back he found a narrow gateway with an arched top, the gate of which was partly open, swinging inward. They both went in and closed the gate, and here they remained. The coming men soon reached the spot, passing close to the gate, and from their remarks it was evident that Kobad's suspicions were correct. They did not stop at the gate, however, and ere long, our two friends resumed their way.

They spoke but little, for both seemed to have plenty of thought that the circumstances had called up. It was very quickly and readily arranged that Feridoon should remain with the astrologer for the present, and hence the latter led the way. He walked more quickly than one of his advanced age could generally do, and at the end of half an hour he entered a narrow, dark lane, near the eastern cliffs, where the dwellings were sparse and poor. At the door of one of these he stopped and knocked, and ere many moments had elapsed a voice asked, from within, who was there. Kobad answered, and soon afterwards the door was opened by a black servant, who held a lamp in his hand. This latter individual led the way to the back part of the building, where our hero found a room not only well furnished, but displaying some signs of wealth. The slave disappeared and the old man and the youth sat down together.

"One question I must ask," said Feridoon, whose feelings were now centered upon one point. "Is Zillah safe?"

"Just as safe as though she were here," confidently returned Kobad.

"But she is within the power of the king, and you know what base passions move him."

"I know all that, but Zillah is not in his power, even though he may think she is. There is one ever near her who will watch over and protect her."

Feridoon looked puzzled. The astrologer noticed the look and quickly added:

"It is not an imaginary personage of whom I speak, but I have been to the bedside of Zillah, and I know there is one there who will easily and promptly stop any wickedness the king may attempt. So make yourself easy on that score.

As soon as the maiden is perfectly recovered, I can remove her from the palace without trouble; but nowhere else can she receive better medical treatment than there."

"But she is not very sick?"

"No. Her constitution will easily throw off the malady. In a very few days, at the farthest, she will be as well as ever."

The youth seemed satisfied with this, and he spoke to that effect. There were many things he would have liked to know—many things that seemed strange and marvellous to him, but he let them pass, having become assured that Kobad liked not to be questioned on that point.

It was now sometime past midnight, and having called the black slave into the room, the astrologer bade him conduct Feridoon to a place of rest. The youth followed his sable guide up a flight of narrow, wooden stairs, then down another flight into a sort of hall, where a door opened into a back yard. Our hero saw a high wall that enclosed this yard, and wondered exceedingly when he saw his guide step out upon the dew-wet pavement; but he followed without

asking any questions. The next movement was more strange still, for the slave proceeded directly to the brick wall, and having stooped down and removed a brick from its resting-place and moved some secret spring which was hidden within the aperture thus revealed, he raised up a slab of stone from the pavement, and then motioned the young man to go down.

"Fear not," said a voice; and, on turning, our hero found Kobad standing by his side. "We have cause for care, you know. Go down and I shall quickly follow."

Thus bidden, Feridoon moved to the place and stepped upon a ladder that he found there, and having descended he waited at the foot for the old man, who soon came with the lamp. After passing along a narrow passage the youth found himself in a very neat and comfortable apartment, in which were two beds. The old man pointed him to the one that he might occupy, and without further remark than to wonder at the ingenuity displayed in the concealing of the place, he undressed himself, and soon afterwards he had begun to dream.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRIENDS, AND HOW THEY WORKED.

ON the morning following these events, the king was early astir, and when he reached the apartment where he usually gave audience to his officers and heard the reports of the night, he found some half dozen of his officials there, and he noticed at once that they were troubled countenances. At first he felt misgivings, for of late he had become used to disasters and disappointments. His first question was of the old astrologer—to know if he had been captured. Of course he received a negative answer to this question, but he saw that that was not all, and he asked what more. After some hesitation and an interchange of quick, furtive glances among the officers, one of them related to the monarch the circumstance of there having been found eight men in the great square near Rustem's palace—that six of them were dead and two of them so injured that they had but just recovered their speech.

Sohrab started first forward with his hands extended, and then he started back again. He trembled violently, and for some seconds tried to speak without being able to articulate. But at length he managed to give the order for having those two men sent up to him, and ere long afterwards they made their appearance, one of them limping along with much difficulty and the other brought in a chair borne upon two spears.

"Now," whispered the king, "what is it?"

The soldier who had walked up told the story. He told how his party had found the old astrologer, and how they had gagged and bound him and started to bring him to the palace. Then he told of the coming of Feridoon, and of the part that young man had acted. The poor fellow upon the chair not only corroborated the statement, but he gave some further light by repeating the language used by Feridoon.

"But here are only eight of your party accounted for," said the king, showing by his tone and manner that he hardly knew what he said.

"The other two must have fled," returned one of the officers, "probably fearing your majesty's wrath."

But his majesty paid no attention to this answer. He had walked to the opposite side of the apartment, where he remained, with his back turned to his officers, for some minutes. When he returned, his face was very pale and rigid as marble. His teeth were set and his hands clutched tightly together. He gazed around upon his subjects some moments, and when he spoke his voice was firm and strong, though a close observer might have seen from the marks upon his brow that he suffered much pain.

"Go and set every officer of my guard upon the watch," he said. "Of the five thousand

soldiers who are quartered here, take every one if necessary, and spread them through the city. Let every street, square and every nook, of whatever kind, be searched and watched. I would have that old man, and that young one, too, brought before me. Let it be alive, if you can, but dead if it must be. And be ye sure, also, that their mouths be stopped. Let it appear that either of them have spoken after their capture and those who do the neglect shall surely die. Can you remember this?"

The officers assured their royal master that his commands should be obeyed, and then they set off at once to see the thing done, and the two soldiers were conducted back to the place from whence they had been taken, considering themselves fortunate in having escaped alive. They did not know that their lives, that were of such consequence to them, gave their king no more weight of thought than two flies. He happened to forget them in the press of more important business.

In one hour from that time, the citizens were not a little astonished at seeing great numbers of soldiers spreading themselves over the city. Into every street and place they entered, and little lanes that had never before received such marked distinction, were now guarded by live soldiers. What it meant people could not imagine, but they knew something strange must have happened, though they could not even have dreamed of so strange a thing as the sending out of all these soldiers after two men—one of them a man far gone on the down-hill of life, and the other a youth just at the foot of life's ladder.

Meanwhile the king remained in the apartment where we left him. He was all alone, not even one of his eunuchs being with him, and most of the time he had been walking up and down the paved floor. But he had stopped now, and his hands were clasped upon his brow, and thus leaned against one of the marble pillars. At length he started back, and as he brought his hands together with an energetic movement, he said:

"And all this is about a girl—"

No, no, king, it is not all about a girl. Had you never seen that girl, the same cloud that now hangs over you would have opened its storm upon your head.

"And I must fret and rave just for that which is all my right if I please. By my life, the pretty piece of trouble is mine, and this very

night shall she become my wife. She is well, now. I saw her up this morning, and the rose is back on her cheek. I need not fear that old—"

The king stopped here, and the ashy pallor once more came to his face; but he soon overcame the fear, and just as he would have gone into another soliloquy, one of his eunuchs entered his presence and asked him if he would give audience that day, at the same time informing him that many people had assembled in the audience chamber.

Sohrab bade the slave tell his officers that he would be with them soon. Then he went and swallowed a bowl of wine, and after this he went down to the great hall where he was wont to give his judgment on all cases his subjects chose to present. People saw that something ailed the king, and several of the citizens withdrew without presenting their cases, for they saw that he rendered his judgments most wildly, and sometimes without any possible reference to the case in hand.

One old man, who had three slaves, made complaint against a merchant for having seized one of his slaves for trespass, and put said slave to hard work in his own shop. The complainant was willing, he said, to pay whatever money might be due for the trespass, but he wanted his slave. The king heard the case, and he decided that all three of the slaves should be given over to the merchant.

It so happened that the merchant had only kept the one slave out of a whim, and when he got out of the audience chamber, he laughed heartily at the strange ruling of the king, but at the same time assured the old man he should not take the slaves.

Sohrab was so fairly out of his head that every one noticed it, and by the time he had rendered judgment in a dozen cases those who dared stole away, and some of the others presented false statements, plaintiff and defendant agreeing thereto.

After all the business was disposed of, which came up, the king entered into a private business with some of his own officers, so that he did not get away from the great hall till near the middle of the afternoon. He then went to his dinner, and after having taken a few turns in his garden, he went to see Zillah.

The maiden was sitting by the open window when the king entered, and she did seem about well of her sickness. It had been but a slight attack of fever, which had yielded at once to

skilful treatment; and the constitution which no irregularity of life had ever shattered, arose quickly above the malady. Sohrab entered the room and motioned the attendant away, and in a moment more the monarch and the maiden were left alone.

"Now, sweet Zillah," commenced the royal suitor, "the time draws nigh for the bliss of our loves. You will soon be mine. Since yesterday you have recovered wonderfully, and it almost seems a special work of God in my favor. Are you not nearly recovered?"

Zillah could not deny it, for she felt that she was physically well.

"I am not so weak, sire, as I have been, and I think that health has been once more restored to me."

"And do you not feel thankful?"

"I do, most surely."

"But you cannot feel so joyful as I do, for the hour that gives you health gives to me the most beautiful wife on earth."

As the king thus spoke, he placed his arm about the maiden's neck, and would have kissed her, but he saw that she had turned deadly pale, and he started back.

"What is it?" he quickly asked.

"O, spare me! spare me!"

"Spare you? And from what?"

"From the dreadful fate you have mentioned."

"Do you mean the marriage with me?"

"Yes, sire," faintly uttered Zillah. She had made a mistake in her choice of words, but she was too much moved to see it.

"And do you call becoming my wife a *dreadful fate*?" hissed the king, in rank madness.

"Alas, sire," uttered the poor girl, hardly knowing what she said, "how can I look upon the crushing of my heart without dread?"

"And is it thus you meet my love? Is it thus you will receive the proffered affection of your king? Speak to me, girl, and tell me if you mean thus to treat me."

"O, spare me! Let me rest now! Come to me—"

"When?"

"Never! never!—O, never!"

And Zillah, as she thus gasped, bowed her head and groaned aloud. She was frantic, and knew not how or what to speak. Her mighty love for one whom she believed to be noble, generous, virtuous and pure, was stout within her, and she could not give it up. But she could not help fearing the king, for she read in

every line of his features the passion that raged within him. Sohrab gazed upon her awhile after she had given utterance to that last incoherent sentence, and he at first seemed almost bewildered by the words, the tone and the manner; but soon he found his tongue, and in a thrilling whisper, he said:

"I see that words will be of no more avail. This very night you shall be my wife! Now mark me. *This very night!*"

"For the love of God!" shrieked Zillah, sinking down upon her knees, and raising her clasped hands towards the king, "spare me! spare me! I will be your slave—your meanest slave. I will shelter with the Ethiop, and drudge with the very beasts—but O, spare my love! break not my heart! tear not my soul in pieces!"

The king gazed down upon the imploring maiden, and a wicked smile worked upon his features.

"Girl," he said, and his tone was cold and decided, "as sure as we both live, you shall be my wife this night! I have no more to say now. Your own sense will tell how best to prepare for my coming."

So the king spoke, and then he turned from the room. Zillah arose to her feet and threw herself upon a couch, but soon she felt a hand upon her head, and she looked up. It was her attendant who was with her, an old female slave who had long held the station of nurse to the royal wives.

"What is it?" she asked, raising the unhappy girl to a sitting posture.

"Alas, Thais, I am doomed!" the frantic maiden murmured.

"Doomed?" repeated Thais. "But how?"

Zillah repeated all that the king had said.

"To-night?" muttered the old nurse, to herself. "By my life, but Sohrab hastens the matter with a haste most unseemly."

"And my last of earthly joy is gone from me forever! No more shall the sun rise to give me blessing in his golden beams, no more shall the soft zephyr come to impart freshness to my cheek, nor can the tender breath of friendship, even, be a source of joy to me more!"

"Be not too sure," answered Thais, in a matter-of-fact sort of way. "The king has forgotten himself. Be sure you shall see no more of him to-night."

Zillah started up and caught the old woman by the arm, and gazed half wildly into her face.

"What mean you?" she gasped.

"Just what I say. The king shall not trouble you to-night."

"O, if I could be sure of this!"

"I swear it."

"And you will save me?"

"Yes."

The maiden threw her white arms about the nurse's neck, but Thais soon shook them off, saying, as she did so:

"I must away now and attend to this matter. Fear not, Zillah, for as I live, the king shall not harm you."

Thais went to a little cot on which she slept, and from beneath the bedding she drew a small paper parcel, which she hid in her bosom, and then having once more bade the girl be of good heart, she left the room. She traversed many passages and corridors, and at length she reached that part of the palace where the king's own apartments were situated. She looked into several of them, but she found not the one she sought, and she sat down to await his coming. She waited there full fifteen minutes, and at the end of that time some one approached. She moved out of the way, but not far, for she soon saw that he whom she sought was he that now came. It was one of the king's eunuchs, Bahboul, whom we have already seen in confidence with the monarch. Thais called to him as he came near, and without asking any question he followed her until they came to a secluded place.

"Now, Bahboul," spoke the nurse, hurriedly but distinctly, "the king has planned to make Zillah his wife this night."

"Are you sure?" asked the eunuch, somewhat nervously.

"Most sure. He has sworn it with a solemn oath."

"Then our course is clear. Have you got the powder?"

"Yes. Here it is. Now remember—fix it so that he shall be sure to drink it."

"I will do my part."

That was all that was necessary in that quarter, and Thais returned to the chamber of her charge.

Bahboul went at once to the apartment where the king always supped, and there he waited the coming of his master, for the time of his usual coming was near at hand. Just at dusk Sohrab made his appearance, and ordered his wine immediately.

He always did this, and for this moment had Bahboul waited. The eunuch hastened to obey the order, and with a dexterous movement he emptied a portion of the powder into the bowl. The king took it and drank; then he ate some slight quantity of food and called for his bowl again. After this he arose and went into another apartment. In an hour more he would have gone to claim the sweet Zillah, but a strange drowsiness had come over him, and he thought he would take a short nap, bidding his slaves awaken him in just one hour. At the end of the time they tried to obey him, but they could not awaken him. They shook and rolled and punched, and lifted him up and let him fall, but all to no purpose. The sleep would not let go its hold upon him, and at length they gave it up in despair.

So that night the maiden passed in peace, while the king slept on, all unconscious of what strange scenes were awaiting him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLOUDS AND LIGHT.

WHEN the king arose he rubbed his eyes and looked about him. He found the sun shining into the apartment, and he thought he must have made some mistake when he laid down. He thought it was near sunset then. It was some minutes before he noticed that the sun was in the eastern heavens, but when he did notice it, he started forward and grasped one of his trembling eunuchs by the arm.

"Villain! dog!" he gasped. "What does this mean?"

The terrified slave gasped for breath, and after a while he related what had occurred the previous night. He told how they had tried to wake him—how they had done all they dared do, without effect.

This set the king pondering for a moment, and then he knew that he had been drugged in some way. A few moments more of thought and he knew that he must have had it in his wine. Then he turned upon his slaves, and with a harsh oath his hand leaped for his sword, but he could not find it.

"Slaves!" he roared, "where are my weapons?"

"Bahboul took them from you while you slept, sire. He said they would prevent your resting easy."

"Ha! And was't not Bahboul who gave me my wine last night?"

"Yes, sire."

"He dies! Go send him hither."

Some of the slaves withdrew, but they returned without finding Bahboul. The king now literally frothed at the mouth with rage, and, for a while, he was totally unable to speak; but at length he managed to mutter, in a hot, hissing tone:

"'Tis a plot! I see! But now they shall be overtaken in their work! This very hour—this very minute—I go to Zillah—and henceforth she is mine! And then they shall all be mine—and they shall die. But what of the astrologer? Has he been captured?"

"He had not, an hour since, sire."

"Be sure that I know when he is taken. Remain you here. I go to the lady Zillah."

The king hastened out of the room as he thus spoke, and with quick strides he made towards the damsel's apartments. He found her already dressed, but he did not wonder at this, for the sun was more plain here, and he saw that it had been up many hours.

"Ah," he said, after he had closed the door behind him, "you escaped me last night. Did you know I should not come?"

"I prayed to God that you might not," Zillah replied, in a trembling tone.

"You did, eh? But let me assure you 'twas not God who answered your prayer. There were human hands in that work. Did you know it?"

"I know nothing, sire, save that you did not come."

"I believe you speak falsely," muttered Sohrab, eyeing the maiden keenly. "But it wont save you, for now I have come to fulfil my pledge. Are you ready?"

Zillah did not speak, for she knew not what to say. She cast her eye upon Thais, but this latter personage was busily engaged in pulling a flower in pieces which she had plucked from a vine that grew up by the window. The king noticed the direction of her glance, and he turned his own attention for a moment upon the nurse.

"Slave!" he cried; "you know something of this affair."

"Me, sire?" exclaimed the old woman, looking up with well feigned wonder upon her face.

"Yes—you. You know something of this."

"I only know that I waited here until long after midnight, to deliver my charge into your hands, and that you did not come."

The monarch could read nothing but open truth upon the face of the nurse, and he thought she might be guiltless. But one thing troubled him, or perplexed him, at least. Zillah did not seem so frightened as she did before, and he thought she regarded him with a sort of cool indifference. Could the king have seen what she had seen, he would not have wondered at this, for behind the heavy arras that covered the entrance to a small closet, stood a stout black form, armed with a sharp sword. That form was Bahboul, and the sword was for the king ere harm should come to the maiden.

But Bahboul was not destined to slay his royal master, nor was Zillah destined to see the bloody work done, for just as the king was moving towards her, two eunuchs unceremoniously entered the place.

"How now, slaves?" cried Sohrab, in quick, passionate tones. "Why come ye here?"

"Sire," spoke one of them, while they both knelt, "the audience chamber is crowded, and many people demand the royal presence."

"Then go bid them wait our pleasure."

"But, sire, your ministers demand that you shall come. It is now one whole hour past the time."

"And let it be an hundred hours. The king is not tied by his subjects."

"And shall we tell them to wait?"

"Yes. Tell them I have business of more importance."

"And what shall be done with the prisoners?"

"Prisoners?"

"Yes, sire. The old astrologer and Feridoon."

"Ha! Now, by the gods, ye move me. Go tell the minister I'll be there quickly."

The eunuchs withdrew, and the king turned to Zillah.

"Be sure," he said, "that I shall return very soon. I shall quickly shake this business from my hands, and then you'll be fully in my power. When I do return I shall be yours alone to love."

Shortly afterwards Sohrab entered the great audience hall attended by his eunuchs and four of his chief household officers. With a quick step he ascended the royal throne and seized his sceptre. He stepped thus quickly, that his tremulousness might not be seen. He gazed about him, and amid the throng he saw the tall, venerable form of Kobad, and next to him stood the firmly knit person of the Lion Heart.

"How now?" the monarch cried, in a passion.

"'Twas my order that these rebels should be gagged. Who has dared to disobey me?"

"Sire," spoke an old officer, named Ban, "Saffo, Lonza and myself brought the prisoners hither, and we knew nothing of this order."

The king gazed upon the three men thus designated, and he liked not the looks they gave him. They were the same three whom we saw with Kobad in the cave.

"Slaves, stand before me!"

At this order, twelve stout, black slaves moved out in front of the throne.

"Now listen to my order, and upon your lives let it be quickly obeyed. Bind those two men and take them hence. Take them to the dungeon where the youth was once before."

The slaves bowed, and then turned to the spot where the accused men stood.

"Hold one moment!" spoke Kobad. "I must speak ere I am condemned."

"Not a word! Not a word!" shouted the king. "Off with him!"

"Now, by the justice of heaven and the laws of Persia, I demand to speak!" uttered the old man, stepping upon the back of one of the marble lions, and gazing around upon the assembled multitude.

The people had flocked hither now because

they knew the astrologer and Feridoon were captured, and a murmur, loud and deep, arose in the audience chamber.

"Let him speak!" were the words that greeted the ears of the king.

"By the gods of my country, he shall not speak!" roared the king. "Off with him, I say. Slaves, do my bidding, or you die on the spot! Call in the soldiers, and bid them clear the place. We'll see who is king in Persia!"

"Sire," spoke Kanah, in a low tone, "you had better let him speak."

"What! and do you, too, turn against me?" uttered Sohrab, gazing angrily into the face of his old counsellor.

"I speak for you, sire. Let him speak. It is but simple justice, and the people will most surely demand it."

As Kanah thus spoke he stepped back from the throne, and as the king followed him with his eyes he saw that all his officers remained passive and silent. No—not wholly silent, for they whispered together with anxious, nervous looks.

Meanwhile, both Kobad and Feridoon moved towards the throne, and just as the king was upon the point of ordering his slaves to seize them, he noticed that one of his old generals, at the head of a hundred stout soldiers, was following them up.

"Now Foaz," the monarch uttered, addressing the general, "what means this? Have ye come to help me?"

"I have come to aid justice, sire," returned the old warrior; "the prisoner must be heard, for he has matters of importance to communicate."

The king sprang to his feet and clapped his hand upon his hip, but his sword-hilt was not there. Then he sank back upon his throne, and his face turned deadly pale—so pale that all the blood settled back into his coward heart, and left him too weak to stand.

"Kobad," said the general, "you may speak now; and," he added, turning his eyes upon the royal slaves, "the first man who dares to interrupt you dies."

"My countrymen—"

"He is an Arabian!" gasped the king.

"I am a Persian!" spoke Kobad, nobly and clearly, "and to my noble countrymen would I speak. Do ye not all know that Persia is not now what she has been? Her glory is fading, and the energies of the people are going out. Ere long some envious prince will make war

upon us, and we are lost, *if we have no king!*"

Sohrab started up from his throne, but he did not speak.

"And whence comes all this?" the old man continued. "Is it not a judgment of an offended God for the crimes of him who calls himself king? Listen to me. You all remember the noble Gushtasp—you who are old enough. Did you not love him?"

A low murmur broke from the multitude, and it grew louder and deeper, and the people all said yes.

"But who shall tell the deep crime that deprived you of that noble man? You know he was murdered, and ye think the robbers of the desert did it. No, no. Sohrab feared that Gushtasp would be made king, and he sent out his own slaves to murder him as he came home to attend the funeral of the dead king. Those slaves most faithfully did the work, and when they returned with Gushtasp's life upon their hands, Sohrab killed them every one with poison—and he thought the secret of his crime was safe!"

"Black, accursed liar!" shrieked the king, starting up again; "how is your soul sworn to falsehood. My people, he is crazy. Listen not to him! Slaves—take him away!"

But the slaves dared not stir. The old man gazed a moment into the face of the frantic monarch, and then he resumed:

"I know of what I speak, for I saw the deed done. I saw those murderers, and I knew them for Sohrab's slaves; but I was too late to stop the murder. Gushtasp spoke one word to me ere he died, and that word was—*Sohrab!* But look into the coward's face, and see if the guilt is not there!"

Every eye was turned upon the king in an instant, and some almost pitied him for the dreadful terror he suffered. His face was now fairly purple with suffocation, and the power of speech was gone from him.

"And now listen further. Know ye not how for years Sohrab has trodden upon your liberties and sacrificed your interests to his own base passions? Even now he has within his palace a poor maiden whom he has snatched from her home, and against every plea of mercy and justice would he sacrifice her. You know the laws of Persia. What must be the penalty of all these crimes?"

"*Death!*" murmured a hundred voices.

"Ay—and let the sentence be carried out."

"But we have no law that can put a king to death," gasped Sohrab, seizing upon this one hope. "'Tis open treason to speak of the thing!"

"'Tis true," uttered Kanah. "We cannot put a king to death."

And so all the ministers said. The king was above the reach of human law.

"And now let the traitor be led away," cried Sohrab, now almost himself again.

"Not yet," pronounced Kobad, while a strange light shone in his still dark eye. "There is a matter of justice to be done yet. Here is an old man who has come to demand his child, and he must be heard."

At this juncture Zak Turan came forward, and close by his side came his trembling wife.

"Now," resumed the old astrologer, "let Zillah be brought."

"No! no! It shall not be!" cried the king.

"Justice! justice!" answered Kobad. "Bahboul, go and lead the maiden hither."

And from behind one of the great pillars stepped the old eunuch. He bowed to the astrologer, and then, before the astounded king could prevent him, he had left the hall.

Once more that purple hue came to the face of the king, for he was fearful yet. A new cloud arose before him, and it was so black that the one which had just passed seemed all light by its side.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

ERE long, the lovely Zillah was led into the audience chamber, and a murmur of surprise and delight arose from the lips of the people as her transcendent beauty shone upon them. She was pale with excitement, but her face flushed when she saw Feridoon, and she did not shrink from his impulsive embrace. Next she saw the good Zak Turan and Rudabah, and she forgot her sorrows.

As soon as this scene was passed, Feridoon sprang upon the back of one of the marble lions which supported one of the corners of the throne, and in a clear, bold tone, he cried :

"My countrymen, I demand at your hands the death of him who murdered my father!"

For a few moments all was hushed with astonishment, but an old soldier cried out :

"'Tis Gushtasp himself!"

And at that moment hundreds recognized the remarkable likeness.

"No, no," spoke Kobad, "it is not Gushtasp—it is his son, and he shall have the boon he craves."

"It cannot be," pronounced the old counselor, "for the person of the king is sacred. But you may now speak of the maiden."

"Ay—and so I will," returned the old man "for she stands the same as stands the noble youth—with a sad, strange story of her life.

Now listen to me, for your very souls shall start in horror at what I shall tell!"

Once more the king started from his throne, but he could not stand, and the words he attempted to speak only gurgled in his throat. The astrologer looked pityingly into his face for an instant, and then went on :

"You all remember Kei Khosrou. He was a king who at least loved his people and feared not their enemies. You remember when the insurrection occurred in Khorason. The king went thither with only a few of his people, knowing that his presence would quell it. Gushtasp was away, and when the king left he gave the throne in charge to Sohrab. Sohrab felt the golden seat beneath him, and he wished to possess it for his own—and with the wish came the purpose. He called two of his trusty messengers to his side and bid them go out and hang upon the king's course, and when he stopped at night, they were to draw the king away by persuasion, and when they had got him at a safe distance from his retinue, they were to kill him and secure the body, and then return to the city with it, and then he would say the king had returned sick and out of his reason, and died.

"The two messengers went out, and they came up with the royal retinue; and at night they made their way into the king's tent, and

under a false pretext they drew him away. When they had gone far enough, and the king demanded to know their business, one of them struck him upon the head; but the king fell not. He drew his sword, and the villains set upon him fiercely. One of them the king killed, but the other struck him down at length, and believed him to be dead. Yet the surviving villain was too weak from loss of blood and exhaustion to either move the king's body, or to bury it, and he crept in among the bushes to recover himself. In the morning the king's retinue found no king when they awoke, and one of them said—'he has ridden on alone.' They hunted some time for him, but not finding him they started on towards Khorason, thinking that he must have hastened on in advance.

"The wounded assassin saw them depart, and just then some peasants came that way, and seeing the body of the king, they picked it up and bore it away. The assassin dared not reveal himself to them, and when they were gone he crept out from his hiding-place and made back towards the city, and there he told Sohrab what had happened. Other messengers were at once sent out, and they found the peasants after two days' search, and the peasants said they had buried the body in the sand, and that the jackals had unearthed it and eaten it up. Then these messengers returned, having first been assured that the peasants knew not whose body they had buried, and told their success to Sohrab. Then he caused some crafty workmen to set at the task of making an image of clay to resemble the king—and it was made, and so truly was it colored that it looked like a human corpse. Then Sohrab gave out that the king had returned sick and crazy, and that he had died; and he caused this image to be dressed in grave-clothes and exhibited it in the hall of judgment, and a barrier was built about it that no hand might profane it. And he told that the queen had become crazy and fled. He meant the king's favorite wife, Roxana, for it was known that she was soon to give birth to a child."

The old man stopped a moment to overcome the emotion that worked upon him, and while he did so his eyes sought those of the king, but the latter could not speak. At length the speaker went on.

"But, my countrymen, those peasants spoke falsely to the messengers who came to them. The king was not killed. Those honest people nursed him, and it was at his command that

they told the messengers he was dead and buried. The king knew who his enemy was, and his only care was to save his favorite wife and child, for Roxana had already given birth to a daughter. One of the peasants had a brother in the city, named Zak Turan, a poor cobbler. The king gave to this peasant his royal signet, and bade him hasten to the city and see Roxana—to see her without Sohrab's knowledge—without the knowledge of any but the women. He did so—he was bold and witty—and Roxana received her husband's warning in season; and she took her infant and fled to the house of the cobbler, where she represented herself as the widow of a poor merchant who had been cruelly put to death by the temporary ruler. And there she found a shelter and a home; but she lived not long—only two short months—and then she gave her infant princess to the cobbler's wife, to care for and love.

"Khei Khosrou got well in season to witness the cruel butchery of the noble Gushtasp, and he saw the general's wife flee with her infant son, but he could not find them. Some of you already know the strange story of that son—how his mother must have been devoured by the wild beasts, and how he was suckled and reared by the wild goats, until Rustem found him. But Khei Khosrou came to the city in disguise. He saw the wicked Sohrab upon the throne, and all sick at heart he turned away from the scene. Royalty had no charms for him—he felt easier with the yoke from his neck, and he resolved to travel.

He saw his infant, but he did not tell the good people who protected it that it was his child, and then he started off. He visited Arabia and Egypt, and other countries. A few years since he returned to this city, and ere long his heart was pained at the wickedness he saw. But his child had grown up beautiful and good, and that gave him joy. Ere long he learned, through an old teacher, of the youth Rustem had found upon the Hetzendarras, and when he saw the youth he knew 'twas Gushtasp's son. Then there came a strange, wild hope to his bosom. He saw that the youth was noble and good, and he hoped to make that youth the husband of his own sweet child—and then give to his wronged and suffering people a virtuous, just and fearless king and queen! *His work is almost done!*"

As the old man ceased speaking, he bowed his head, and big tears started from his eyes. Soon he felt a hand upon his knee, and when he looked

down he found Zillah and Feridoon both at his feet. He raised them up, and with deep cries of joyful emotion they sank upon his bosom.

"My father!" murmured Zillah, "O, my father!"

"Yes, sweet one, I am thy father. I am—I am!"

One moment the old man stood thus, and then he pushed his children from him and started up the steps of gold that led to the throne. With one hand he seized the jewelled sceptre, and with the other he caught Sohrab by the throat and hurled him from the throne.

"Out, dog!" he shouted, while his eyes flashed fire. "What ho! slaves, seize the murderer! People of my kingdom, once more behold your true king, come to set you free from a monster, and to restore joy once more to your hearts, peace to your homes, and plenty to your garners!"

Who doubted that tongue now? Who now did not know those features, all changed as they were by time and troubles? Not one. All gazed a moment at the vénéral man who held the sceptre, and then they fell upon their knees and shouted with all their might in tones of mad joy.

* * * * *

Sohrab had been led away by the very men who had been so lately wont to obey him, and he spoke not a word ere he went. Not one lip fell from his lips, but groans, deep and heavy, could be heard away down in his bosom. He was led away, and that very night he died in his prison-room. He took his own life, for he was found the next morning weltering in his own blood, which came from a wound in the neck made by a small knife. None mourned for him, not even his wives, and his body was placed in a low, dark sepulchre, away off under the mountain, where reposed the bones of malefactors.

Kei Khosrou explained to his friends how he had obtained the assistance of Bahboul and Thais by telling them who he was, and also how he had been obliged to reveal himself to Ban, Saffo and Lenza. And he explained other things, too, until they all wondered they had not known him when first he came among them.

A few days passed away, during which time the restored king was at work night and day in giving order and harmony to the several departments of government. One evening, while he and Kanah were at work among the parchment rolls of the late ruler, the latter opened one of

them, and as his eye ran over it, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What is it?" said the king.

"Light upon a dark subject, sire," returned the old counsellor. "You remember how quickly the insurrection was quelled of itself at Khosrou, after you were supposed to be dead?"

"I do remember it, and I wondered at it."

"Then wonder no more, for see here," uttered Kanah, as he passed over the parchment.

It was a simple document, and told that Sohrab had got up the insurrection in question himself.

"Never mind," said Kei Khosrou, as he rolled the missive up, "he will not breed wickedness any more."

At length the business was all regulated, and then the old monarch saw Feridoon and his own sweet Zillah made man and wife. Then he collected all the nobles of his kingdom, and before them all he resigned his crown to Feridoon, for he was too old to do the duty, and yet he could work when there was need, for his counsel and advice should ever be free while he lived.

Rustem had remained away from the royal palace, for he feared the wrath of the young monarch, but Feridoon recalled him to court, and placed him in a station of honor about his person, and treated him so kindly and generously that even Rustem himself forgot the harshness of which he had been guilty.

And Zak Turan cobbled sandals no longer. He became a man of vast importance at court, being made one of the ushers of the royal apartments and a sort of officer at large, to go and come when he pleased. His wife seldom scolded now, for she was made busy with the young queen's slaves, keeping them in place and at their duty, and what she had of harmless venom she could vent upon them. But they rather enjoyed it than otherwise, from the fact that she was so kind to them always, that they loved to see her have these little spells of selfish enjoyment.

And Persia saw better and happier days. Her commerce with other nations expanded, her laws were improved, her home interests were faithfully looked after, and through all the length and breadth of the land went up praises of love and gratitude to the youthful king, for he was all that a nation, jealous of its honor, and ambitious of its prosperity, could ask.

THE END.

THE GOVERNESS.

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BY T. A. KIMBALL.  
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"WANTED, a Governess. Apply at No. 22, Melville Street, Baltimore."

"Shall I apply for the situation?" mused Ella St. George, as she thoughtfully laid the newspaper, in which was the above advertisement, upon the table; "my little stock of money will soon be exhausted; I must come to some decision quickly, and I may be fortunate enough to find a good home." And she fell into a painful reverie, and thought of the happy time when she had no care for the future, when a kind father had protected her from every ill, a fond mother had gazed with pride and affection on her, and her brother had lovingly twined his fingers in her golden curls.

The tears started to her eyes, as she thought, "where are they now?" From her little window, she could see the white marble that headed her father's and mother's grave. And she had never heard from her brother, or seen him, since the time, five years before, when, on the eve of his departure for Australia, he had cut off one of the locks she prized so much, and pictured to her the future, and the happiness that awaited them when he should have become rich.

Mrs. Allen had just settled herself in the library of her comfortable home, for a quiet morning, having given orders that she should be denied to all callers, with the exception of the applicants for the situation of governess. The servant opened the door, and ushered in a tall, graceful girl, apparently about eighteen. She looked very beautiful as she timidly entered, her auburn hair hanging in rich profusion, her large blue eyes beaming with intelligence, and the purity of her complexion enhanced by contrast with the black habit she wore. Mrs. Allen arose in some surprise, and awaited the object of her visit.

"Madam, I understand you are in want of a governess?"

"Ah! yes; pray be seated. You saw my advertisement in the paper, I presume?"

"Yes, madam."

"Can you teach the usual branches of an English education, with the addition of music, Italian, and French?"

"I think I can, madam. I am a proficient in music, and can teach singing and the rudiments of French and Italian."

"Ah! Would you oblige me by singing, and accompanying yourself upon the piano forte?" said Mrs. Allen. "We will proceed to the drawing-room, if you please," and gracefully rising, she led the way.

Ella seated herself at the beautiful instrument, and commenced singing, with great sweetness, "The light of other days."

Mrs. Allen said, "you sing sweetly; that song is a favorite with me. I think if my terms suit you, I shall like you very well. My daughters are of the respective ages of nine, twelve and fifteen, and the salary I thought of giving is two hundred dollars a year."

Ella accepted the situation.

"If you like," resumed Mrs. Allen, "you can come this evening. You will take your meals in the nursery, with the children, with the exception of dinner. Mr. Allen insists upon the children coming down to dinner; of course, you will accompany them."

Ella assented, and taking leave of Mrs. Allen, promised to come at seven o'clock in the evening.

She now proceeded to the little cottage, where she had boarded since her bereavement, and busied herself the remainder of the day in making the necessary arrangements for her change of residence. Having completed these, and finding she had still an hour at her disposal, she strolled towards the little grave-yard that contained the remains of her parents, and she almost wished that *her* struggle in life was over, and that she was quietly sleeping beside them.

The time for her departure at last arrived; and stepping into the carriage she had ordered, was soon conveyed to the stately looking house that was, for the present, to be her home.

Mrs. Allen and two of her daughters had gone out for the evening, and Miss Lucy, the youngest, was in bed. Miss St. George was informed that she was to share Miss Lucy's room, and was glad to retire at once. Lucy was sleeping, and Ella thought, as she gazed upon her fair, sweet countenance, that she would not have much trouble with her. Hastily undressing, she joined her little companion; and fatigued with the exertions of the day, she was soon in a sound slumber.

The next morning, Mrs. Allen entered the school room, accompanied by her two daughters, Ellen and Geneva, whom she introduced to Miss St. George. "You have already made the acquaintance of Lucy, I perceive," she said; "I

shall leave them entirely to your own judgment, as my time is quite taken up, and I hope you will get on well together."

Twelve months glided away happily. Mr. Allen expressed himself highly gratified with the improvement of his daughters; and their mamma was glad to have the responsibility off *her* hands. They kept very little company, and with the exception of a Mr. Stanley, a constant visitor, Ella had not seen any strangers.

Herbert Stanley was a handsome, intellectual looking man, about thirty years of age, and possessed considerable property in the South. He had never had any chance of conversing much with Ella, as she left the room immediately after dinner, each day, with the two young ladies; but he was particularly attentive to her during dinner, and evidently admired her.

"Mamma, do you not think Ella very handsome?" said Lucy one day to Mrs. Allen.

"I don't know, child; what makes you ask?"

"Well, Mr. Stanley said to pa that he thought her a lovely girl—that she had the grace of a fairy, and the prettiest blue eyes he had ever seen. Pa said he thought so too, and so do I; don't you think so too, mamma?"

"I don't know what Miss St. George is doing, to allow you to plague me now," exclaimed Mrs. Allen; "go up stairs, directly."

"We have finished our studies for this morning, mamma."

"Tell Miss St. George to walk out with you, then."

Ella little dreamed of the storm that was brewing overhead, as she dressed to go out with her young charges. Lucy looked very sad, and felt afraid she had got her gentle governess into some trouble, though she could not see why her mamma should be so ugly.

It was a lovely morning, and they walked towards the old mill, gathering the wild flowers on their way; Geneva playfully insisted upon dressing Ella's hair with the flowers, "just to see how they looked," she said, "as nobody would be coming that way to interrupt them."

They were thus pleasantly occupied, Geneva, in making her governess look like the "Queen of May," and Ellen and Lucy bringing her flowers, when they were startled by a deep toned voice, saying, "Good morning, ladies." Ella started to her feet, and the color rushed to her temples, as she perceived Mr. Stanley, smiling at her confusion. She tried to disentangle her hair from the flowers, but Geneva had fixed them

in so well, that neither she nor her governess could get them out.

The gentleman proffered his assistance, though he said it was a pity to take them out, they were so becoming to her. They now began to think of returning to the house, and Mr. Stanley said he was going to dine with them, and with Miss St. George's permission, would accompany them home. Genevra smiled archly at her governess.

Mr. Stanley and Ella entered into a pleasant conversation, and his animated countenance showed how much he was pleased with his fair companion. They reached the house just as the dinner bell sounded, and she and her pupils hastily ran up stairs to arrange their dresses.

After dinner, the ladies retired, as usual, and Mr. Stanley strolled into the library, and through the door communicating with the conservatory. He had not been there long, when he was aroused by the sound of voices in the library, and he heard Mrs. Allen say:

"I insist upon your leaving my house this evening, Miss St. George. I thought, when I engaged you, that you were a respectable person, and not a detestable flirt."

Ella indignantly repelled the accusation.

"I tell you," exclaimed Mrs. Allen, "that your conduct towards Mr. Stanley was truly shameful, and he might well say, 'that you were a disgraceful flirt!'"

"Madam, I cannot believe that Mr. Stanley would say so, as he has not had any opportunity of judging; and as to 'flirting with him,' I cannot tell what you mean."

"Never mind that. He said so, and remember, you leave my house to-night!"

Ella answered haughtily, "let it be so then," and was about to leave the library, when Mr. Stanley entered, from the conservatory, and begged her to stay a moment.

"I am sorry to have to contradict you," he said, addressing Mrs. Allen, "but I think Miss Ella anything but a 'flirt,' and I think she is, indeed, not suitable for her present situation; she might fill a better one."

Mrs. Allen flounced out of the room.

"Miss Ella," said Stanley, as he seated himself by her side, "will you permit me to ask a few questions, in a spirit of friendship, without attributing it to impertinence?"

"Certainly."

"Where do you think of going, upon leaving Mrs. Allen's?"

"I have not decided; my dismissal has been so perfectly unexpected."

"My mother would be delighted to make your acquaintance, Miss Ella, and you would be very comfortable with her for a few weeks. Do not let any feeling of delicacy induce you to refuse this temporary home. I am at present staying at a hotel, and would feel gratified if you would allow me to convey you to Evergreen Cottage, this evening."

Ella felt uncertain what to do. She did not like to refuse Mr. Stanley's offer, he seemed so earnest and respectful in his desire to serve her, and she finally consented to remain with his mother for the present.

Stanley said he would come for her in an hour. Accordingly, at four o'clock (much to Mrs. Allen's annoyance), a carriage drove up to the door, and Mr. Stanley alighting, inquired if Miss St. George was ready. And, having taken leave of her young charges, and promising to write to them, Mr. Stanley helped her into the carriage, and they soon found themselves in the cheerful little parlor of Evergreen Cottage, his mother's pretty residence.

He introduced Ella, and explained the circumstances that had transpired at Mrs. Allen's. The old lady welcomed her with great cordiality, and assured her she would feel happy in her company as long as she would stay with her. She then rang the bell for tea, and soon after, Herbert, looking at his watch, said he had an engagement, and must leave them; but he would call in to see them in a few days.

When Ella came down, the next morning, she found Mrs. Stanley sitting at the breakfast table, waiting for her.

"Good morning, my dear; how did you sleep?"

"Soundly, madam. I hope I have not kept you waiting for breakfast."

"Not at all, my dear." Just then the servant entered with a beautiful bouquet, of the rarest flowers. There was a slip of paper attached: "For Miss Ella, with Herbert Stanley's compliments."

"O, how very beautiful!" exclaimed Ella; "how I love flowers!"

Mrs. Stanley smiled, and remarked that Herbert was always fond of flowers.

A week had passed away, and Herbert Stanley had not been to his mother's cottage, but each morning he had sent a bouquet for Ella. It was a fine evening, and the ladies were seated at the window, pleasantly conversing, when a

barouche drove up, and Stanley bowed and smiled, as he alighted.

"Well, ladies, how do you get on? Ah! Miss Ella, you are ruining your complexion by staying in the house. Will you not ride with me, this lovely evening? come, it will do you good;" and coming nearer to her, he said, "I have something particular to say to you, and may not have another opportunity, as I leave for the South in a fortnight."

Ella's cheeks were rosy enough, as she left the room to prepare for the ride. She was soon ready; Stanley assisted her into the barouche, and waving their hands to Mrs. Stanley, were soon out of sight. For some time they rode on in silence; Ella admiring the scenery, and Herbert apparently lost in thought. At length, arousing himself, he said:

"Miss Ella, I told you I should have to go South in a fortnight; I shall probably remain two or three years; but I cannot go, without saying how much I esteem—how fondly I love you. Dear Ella, will you be my wife? the light of my southern home? If you refuse, life will indeed be a dreary blank;" and he looked anxiously for an answer.

Ella trembled, and said: "Mr. Stanley, you forget the difference of our stations in life. Your mother——"

"Will be delighted," he said. "Dear Ella, say at once that you will accompany me to the South, as my darling wife."

She was confused; but Stanley construed her silence favorably to his wishes, and tenderly drawing her shawl more closely around her, he turned the conversation upon indifferent subjects, and they were soon once more at Mrs. Stanley's. They entered the parlor together. Herbert's countenance was radiant with happiness. Ella was going to run up stairs, but he, gently detaining her, said:

"Dear mother, allow me to introduce you to my promised bride!"

The old lady was very much affected, and said: "God bless you, my children! May you ever be happy."

And now, need we say how beautiful Ella looked, in her bridal robe of pale blue satin and white lace, and the violets and lilies in her hair? Or how proud the handsome bridegroom looked of his lovely bride? and how the long lost brother returned to witness their happiness?

REMINISCENCES OF CALIFORNIA.

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BY FREDERICK STANHOPE.  
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MONTAIGNE has said "that the history of a great city is the history of its nation;" never, perhaps, was this more fully exemplified than in California.

San Francisco was settled in the year 1775 by the Franciscan monks, sent out from old Spain as missionaries to the Indians; but their "mission" was some three miles from the site of the present city, which, in 1846, was the little pueblo of "Yerbabuena" (sweet herb), so called, from the profusion of a kind of fern growing on the otherwise desolate soil.

For years, it had been scarcely known, save to the geographer, or eastern hide merchant, and only looked on as a convenient depot for the storage of hides; while the fine bay rendered the shipment easy. The town comprised some fifty houses, with perhaps a couple of hundred inhabitants. The buildings of adobes (sun baked bricks) straggled over a large space, fronted by the bay, and backed by a range of sand hills. In the centre of the place was the plaza, with an old one story adobe edifice, having piazzas on two sides, and some pretensions to whitewash, though evidently of many years' standing; this was the custom and court house. The dusty, deserted, grass-grown streets, if streets they could be called, rarely evinced any greater sign of business than a native cart or

two, lazily dragging their way, with vegetables from the mission, or hides for shipment. These carts were curiosities in their way; they had two wheels, cut from solid blocks of wood, with a hole for the axle, and being far from round, as they turned, the cart would sway from side to side; the body was a few boards, with the pole, or shaft, lashed to the *horns* of a pair of oxen. An affair of this kind would come lumbering into town with, perhaps, half a dozen water-melons for a load, brought as many miles.

In the bay, were one or two rusty ships, loaded with assorted cargoes, which they peddled out to the inhabitants at the very reasonable rate of three hundred per cent. profit. These were the stores of California; they monopolized all the trade, and when a signorita wished a new "reboso," or a young cavalier a pair of "calconcellos," instead of doing their shopping in town, they took boats for the harbor, carrying off the hides necessary for payment for their purchases.

An air of languor seemed to pervade all, and everything; it was typical of the condition of the entire country. Occasionally, a "Gente de razon," out for a "pasea," would dash through the streets with gaily caparisoned horse and jingling bit and spurs; and as the fresh breeze from the bay saluted him, he would pause, while puffing his cigarette, to gaze around, and then

gallop off perfectly contented with the condition of affairs, and satisfied that no change could improve them for the better.

Alta California was divided among a few indolent rancheros, many owning immense tracts of land; some had sixty, and in one instance, eighty square miles. Very little of this was under any kind of cultivation; their herds of cattle running wild, afforded them, by their hides, all they required for their simple mode of life, clothing, and a few luxuries from the ships. For many years, the country had remained as nearly as possible in a primitive state. This was the position of California in 1846.

But the star of progress begins to appear in the east. War has been rumored; at first scarce believed, then deemed of so little moment, by the far distant Californian, that it is forgotten. The field, however, is opened; Fremont's account of the passage of the mountains has been published, and the route proved practicable; and western frontiers'-men, becoming crowded, shoulder their rifles and start for the mountains, while the eastern Yankee, wishing for a change, but more cautious, takes ship round the Horn, firm believers all in "manifest destiny." California, they were confident, would follow and take her place by the side of Texas and Oregon.

So they began to drop in on our friends of the Pacific, from the plains, from Mexico, and by sea; the natives became uneasy; these Gringos troubled them with their restless manners. One day, a large ship, filled with armed men, sailed quietly into the bay of San Francisco, and dropped anchor; she had the first detachment of the Seventh Regiment of New York Volunteers. In a week, she was joined by her two consorts.

The Californians rode down to the beach and gazed with stupid wonder, while the troops (some eight hundred) disembarked, and then, as day after day the bowels of these huge monsters of the deep disgorged arms and stores and camp equipage and portable houses, sufficient for an army, they put spurs to their beasts, with a "Caramba, tan pendagos" (great heavens, what fools), "they come here as though to stay; why, we must not permit it." So Pico, and Manuel Castro, and one or two others, headed them to drive out these intruders; but the engagements at San Miguel, and Salinas, and San Jose, taught them a lesson they long remembered, and the war, of short duration, was soon virtually ended in California; outbreaks

would occasionally take place, but they were soon quelled. These Yankees were pig-headed, they *would* stay; and, worse than all, would not conform to the beautiful and necessary "Cosas de paies;" no, heaven help them, they would labor in the hour for the siesta, and disturb those, who wished to sleep, by noisy hammer and saw. The "feastas," also, were violated; why, even the "weaning" of the holy and revered "San Grijalva" was treated as an ordinary day by the "Diabolos." They also interfered with the sacred law; no more could the alcalde, with a touching simplicity, decide in favor of the long-est purse, or the nearest of his kin. No; they must have all the complexity of Chitty and Blackstone, and a jury, and drive one crazy with their interminable arguments; 'twas absurd! The Yankees, however, had a strange power of persuasion, and *generally* managed to have their own way in these matters.

The change was now a perceptible one. Houses, of a new style, were going up in all directions; a wharf, for boats, was in progress of erection at Clark's Point; a newspaper, about eighteen inches square, had appeared, called, very appropriately, the "California Star." It was printed from a font of type found at the mission, and used for age, to give to the world manifestos of sapient "Jef de Politicos," or, gallant "Commandantes." The editor was a seceder from the Mormons. Shops were beginning to appear, where everything, from a California "lariat" to a Yankee washing-machine, might be procured. A ten-pin alley had sprung up, though where the material came from, was a mystery to all. Ships were moored in the bay; business was quite brisk.

The star is rising, but slowly; the new era has commenced, but awaits future events.

Eureka! Gold! pure virgin gold is discovered; and like a spectacle, when the fairy queen waves her wand, the scene changes.

O, Gold! potent enchantress, why art thy praises not sung? Art, science, woman, wine, each have received the praise of bards; while thou, the mistress of all, who founds an empire, or destroys a nation, who art sought by all, *thou* art reviled.

Gold is found in California; from clime to clime flies the news. From distant lands come those white-winged emissaries of commerce, laden with anxious men, and the treasures of the globe, to exchange for the yellow ore. Each land sends her choicest fabrics, and her noblest

sons. The village has become a city; the country, as yet known only by a few adventurers, teems with the population of the universe; this new Exodus. The star has reached its zenith.

We have glanced at "Yerbabuena" in 1846; let us look at it after eight years. As one nears the coast, a bright light from the "Farrallones," a group of barren islands off the harbor, attracts his eye, first proof of the mighty change. It stands on these bleak rocks as a herald to proclaim the new era. Entering the straits, called the "Golden Gate," we see perched on the bold, precipitous rocks, where stood the old "Presidio," a fortress, bristling with guns, and over its battlements waves "the banner of stars." A pilot boat dashes alongside and delivers her welcome freight. As we pass up the beautiful bay, dotted with green islands, and stretching far up into the heart of the country, we see many changes; steamers are passing us, puffing away towards the rivers San Joaquin and Sacramento; the bay is filled with shipping; for miles it seems a dense forest of masts. At last, the town is before us; have we, like Rip Van Winkle, slumbered for a century, or has this fair city, a work of magic, sprung up in a single night? Where we but yesterday left a hamlet, we find a city that would seem the growth of years. We have lost our sense of locality; where now is Clark's Point, with its rugged bluff? Where it should be, is a plain covered with blocks of warehouses; the little boat wharf has gone, but in its place are countless piers, stretching out into the bay, lined with ships and covered with merchandise. The "Plaza," with its adobe custom-house, is a fine square, surrounded by stone, and brick edifices that would do honor to New York; the streets are laid out handsomely and planked; the old ox-cart has given place to the omnibus and stage-coach, though the ruts of the first are scarcely obliterated. Hotels that rival our Revere or Astor, stand where we left the little "pulperias." The bay has had to recede before street after street, and still they go out; where our boats had quietly swung at their anchors, are costly blocks, banking houses and dwellings.

More than thirty thousand inhabitants, eight daily and four weekly papers, three theatres, and sixteen churches, give evidence of the state of prosperity. And this in eight years. But this work has not been done without obstacles.

Three times has the Fire King swept over the city, leaving desolation behind; but nothing can affect its growth and progress. Like the Phoenix, fit emblem, it arises from the ashes rejuvenated. Floods come, but their hearts are stout, and they have plenty of boats; so they e'en live in the second story till the first is dry again. Like Mr. Tapley, they "thrive under adversity," and are not to be turned aside by mere trifles.

Society, also, has kept pace with all else. Instead of the rough "vaquero," or bare-footed "doncella," we find our own fair country-women aiding to soften and civilize the land and people, and much have they done, and a great deal more will they yet effect by their presence. Husbands have now their wives to make home not merely one in name, lovers have found means to bring out their adored ones, sisters join brothers, and we find a home circle. Churches have been reared, and societies, as numerous and *more zealous* than at home, are brought together. A worthy shepherd, leaving his beloved flock to mourn his loss, comes out to establish Sabbath schools, the great object of his life, and succeeding far beyond his most sanguine hopes, returns, alas! to die. Illness contracted on the Isthmus hastens a chronic complaint, and the faithful servant, with the prayers of thousands, lays down his cross, to find his reward in another world.

The city, like the country, is cosmopolitan. The Frenchman cannot work to advantage in the mines, so he opens a "cafe" in the city, while his wife has a "lansquet" table, to relieve any whose pockets are plethoric; or, if he has no capital, he invests half a dollar in a brush and bottle of blacking, and with a stand for the foot, cleans your boots on the "plaza," as you would have it done on the "boulevard." The Chinese, exclusive, and shut off from the world, here is changed; rolling up his tail under a hat, he takes a reef in his trowsers, and goes in for the laundry business, having a peculiar faculty for changing your linen shirts into cotton ones. Swiss, Dutch, Greek, and Russian, all are here at home; gold has levelled all distinctions and barriers. The old mission church is now a store, and where the devout Mexican bowed to the shrine of the blessed Virgin, the puritanical Yankee, abjuring all idolatry, worships the almighty dollar.

THE BROKEN EAR-RING.

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BY MRS. CAROLINE ORNE.  
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"I AM glad you've called, for I have something I wish to show you," said Hester Harcourt to her friend, Isabel Leeds, who had run in for a few minutes, in a neighborly way.

"What is it?"

"Go with me to my dressing-room, and you shall see."

Having entered the dressing-room, Hester handed Isabel a pair of diamond ear-rings.

"Why, Hester," said Isabel, with a look and accent of surprise, "these are as handsome as Mrs. Pendleton's, and she gave three hundred dollars for hers."

"And I gave three hundred for mine. They are much handsomer than Mrs. Pendleton's, I think. Let me show you how well they become me."

Having placed them in her ears, she turned from the mirror to Isabel.

"What do you think? Don't they suit my style?"

"Exactly," was Isabel's reply. "I didn't think that the effect would be so brilliant. I believe diamonds never appear so splendid as when in contrast with black hair, dark, lustrous eyes, and cheeks—as the story-writers say—like the heart of a red rose. For all that, Hester, I shouldn't care to lay out three hundred dollars for a pair of ear-rings."

"I am as well able to wear three hundred-dollar ear-rings as Mrs. Pendleton. And you wear embroidery of the most expensive kind. In that, you are more extravagant than I am. I don't think of wearing French embroidery, except on particular occasions."

"I never wear it on any occasion. I employ a young girl, who supports herself and her little sister by doing fine needle-work."

"Well, I don't want imitation French embroidery any more than imitation diamonds."

Hester was a little excited, and hastily removing one of the ear-rings from her ear, it caught in one of her curls, and became so entangled as to break the ring.

"How unlucky!" said she. "I must send and get it mended at once, for I wouldn't, on any account, miss wearing them to Mrs. Burford's party this evening."

She rang the bell, which was promptly answered by a little girl of nine or ten years old.

"Do you know where Wall Street is?" said Hester.

"I was there once, but am not certain that I can find the way."

"If I direct you which way to go, you can find it, stupid as you are, I should think."

"Perhaps I can—I will try; but I've been in the city so short a time."

"Hadn't you better go yourself, Hester?" Isabel ventured to say. "As the child may lose her way, I shouldn't think it prudent to entrust her with anything so valuable."

"Why, it is six o'clock now, and I've not yet concluded what dress to wear this evening."

"Let me go, then; I should like the walk."

"To confess the truth, I want you to assist me about a few little things which I have neglected to attend to, which you can do as well as not, as you've taken it into your head not to attend the party to-night. Come this way, Floy, and mind what I say to you."

The child timidly advanced to the table where Hester stood.

"Do you see this?" said she, holding up the diamond ear-ring.

"Yes, ma'am."

"It is broken, as you see, and I wish to have it mended."

She then gave her what she considered the necessary directions to enable her to find the shop where she was to get it done. "It is worth a hundred and fifty dollars," Hester went on to say, "and if you lose it, you'll wish yourself back to the almshouse again, where I took you from, out of pity."

"If I lose it, shall you put me in the dark closet, where the great chest is, with the dead man's bones in it?" asked the child, turning pale.

"Yes, and shall keep you there all night."

"Please, Miss Hester, don't make me carry it then," and tears started in the poor child's eyes.

"But I shall make you; and if you lose it, it will be because you are careless. Remember you are to wait till it's done. It won't take a great while to do it, and you must be back by seven o'clock, or a quarter after."

"Can she read writing?" Isabel inquired of Hester.

"I don't know—can you, Floy?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Stop one minute, then," said Isabel; and taking a pencil from her pocket, she wrote on a slip of paper the directions Hester had given, in a clear, legible hand.

The child's face brightened as she looked at what Isabel had written, for she felt sure that it would enable her to find the way.

"What does she mean about the dark closet and the chest?" said Isabel, as soon as she was gone.

"La, Isabel," said Hester, laughing, "you

don't suppose I keep a chest of bones, do you? I am not studying anatomy."

"No, but why should the child think of such a thing?"

"Why, I told her about the closet and chest of bones just to frighten her. There must be something to keep her in awe, or I shall lose all control over her."

"I should think it wrong to endeavor to excite a child's fears in that way. What is her name?"

"Florence Lisle."

"A pretty name—don't you think so?"

"Yes, pretty enough; but when associated with the idea of an almshouse pauper, it sounds to me rather ludicrous."

"Do you know anything respecting her parents?" asked Isabel.

"No, I didn't trouble myself about that."

"She has a sweet face, though there is a mournful expression in her large, dark eyes, which made me feel sad. There has been a time, I cannot doubt, when she was surrounded by comfort and plenty. Had she always been poor and friendless, so dark a shade of sorrow could not rest on her fair, young brow. It is by those who have seen better days that the misery, occasioned by want and its attendant evils, is the most keenly felt. The poor little wretch, who has never known anything but poverty and unkind treatment, possesses in most instances a facility, truly marvellous, in throwing all its griefs to the winds, whenever its physical wants are temporarily supplied, and it can get beyond the reach of the heavy hand, so ready to fall on its luckless head."

"Well, Isabel, leave the subject of beggars and paupers to discuss some other time, and help me to decide what to wear this evening. If you will, I will promise to use all my influence in getting you appointed lady-principal of some orphan asylum. Here are three such lovely dresses, I don't know which to choose. At any rate, I want to wear the one which will best become me, for I understand that there is a gentleman going to be present who has been living in China several years, who is as rich as a Jew, and handsome as an Adonis."

"What is his name?"

"I couldn't ascertain. Mrs. Pendleton, who mentioned him to me, had forgotten."

While Hester and Isabel were examining the dresses, Florence, with a tiny box clasped tightly in her hand, was walking with all possi-

ble speed towards the shop where she was to get the ear-ring mended. When arrived, as she entered, a man decently dressed, who was walking leisurely by, stopped and looked in at the door. Florence, having raised the lid of the box, handed it to a man behind the counter, and asked him if he could mend the ear-ring. He could mend it, he said, and she told him that she was to wait till it was ready.

"It won't take long to do it," he said, taking the ear-ring from the box, and examining it. He then opened a door, communicating with a back apartment, and gave directions for it to be done without delay.

Though she was not detained more than half an hour in the jeweller's shop, Florence, when she commenced returning, found her progress retarded by the number of people she met on the sidewalk, there having been either a lecture or a concert near by. She had not gone far, before she was jostled so rudely by one among a number of men and boys, who suddenly turned a corner, that she was thrown down. In her attempt to save herself from falling, the box, containing the diamond ear-ring, escaped from her hand, though almost at the same instant, she regained possession of it. The man who had been the means of her fall, instead of hurrying on with the crowd, had remained behind, and taking hold of her arm, assisted her to rise to her feet.

"Are you hurt, my little girl," said he.

"Not any, thank you, sir," she replied; and raising her eyes to his face, as she spoke, she recognized him as the same man she saw standing at the door of the jeweller's shop, shortly after her entrance.

She, then, thought his face particularly repulsive, and now, though he spoke softly, and appeared kind, she did not like his looks, and wished, within herself, that he would not keep so closely by her side, and more particularly, that he would let go her hand, which he kept firmly clasped in his, lest, as he said, she should be again thrown down.

"How far have you to go?" said he, after they had proceeded a short distance.

"A good ways yet," she replied; and thanking him for his kindness, she told him she did not wish to trouble him to go any further.

"O, it is no trouble—none at all; and if I leave you, and you should be thrown down again, you may get hurt, and lose that little box you hold so tight in your hand. You haven't

told me what street you wish to go to—is it Pearl Street?"

"No, sir—Bleeker Street."

"Then we had better turn down this alley. The distance will be much shorter."

"Miss Harcourt told me that I must go this way."

At this moment the clock of a church hard by commenced striking seven, and recollecting that Miss Harcourt told her she must be back at seven, or a quarter past, and recalling to mind the threatened penalty, should she fail to be there at the time, she inquired of the man how long it would take to reach Bleeker Street.

"That," he replied, "depends on which way you go."

"Will it take more than a quarter of an hour, the way we are going now?" said she.

He saw by the earnest way in which she made the inquiry, that she was anxious to arrive within the time she had specified, and shaped his answer accordingly.

"Yes," said he; "twice that time; but we can be there in less than ten minutes if we turn down the alley I spoke to you about."

She hesitated a minute, and then said:

"I believe I had better go that way, then."

Without giving her time to change her mind, he turned, still holding her by the hand, and soon they were hurrying through the narrow alley, which Florence expected would so materially shorten the distance. It terminated in a respectable looking street, but her conductor soon turned from this into another. Several more turns were made, when Florence, with a feeling of alarm, found they were in a dirty-looking street, where the buildings were mean and dilapidated. She thought to herself how strange it was, that the handsome street where Miss Harcourt lived, should be near such a vile, wretched-looking place.

"Are we almost there?" she asked.

"Yes, we shall soon be there now," was his answer, and looking round to make himself sure that he was not observed, he unlocked the door of an old building, which he quickly entered, drawing Florence in with him. All this was done so suddenly and unexpectedly, that it was hardly realized by her, till she saw the man lock the door inside, and put the key in his pocket.

"There, sit down and rest yourself," said he, "and then you'll be better able to find that fine street, where you live."

"I am not tired. Please let me go, now."

Miss Harcourt said I must be back by a quarter past seven, and if I don't get there at the time, she'll punish me."

"Well, it's more'n half past seven now, and as it is too late to escape the beating the fine lady will give you, you may as well be quiet, and stay here a while longer. I've got to go away now, and while I'm gone, you may go in back here, and stay with my sister."

He opened a door, and pushed her into a small back room.*

"Now," said he, "I'll take charge of that little box you hold on to so tight, and if you're hungry, the woman will give you something to eat."

"O, don't take the box, sir!" said she, "for I mustn't stay any longer. Miss Harcourt is going to a party to-night, and must have the earring to wear."

"There's no hurry about her having it; and in my opinion, it will be safer in my keeping than yours. Give it to me, and save your fingers a wrenching!"

"I can't let you have it, sir—I can't, certain. It is a diamond ear-ring, and is worth a hundred and fifty dollars. Miss Harcourt told me it was."

"That's more than I expected 'twas worth. Come, no more fooling. I mean what I say. Give it to me."

This was said with a look so stern, and in a voice of so much anger, that Florence, not daring to refuse any longer, gave him the box.

"There, that's right," said he. "That's be-havin' like a woman. I'm sorry that necessity drives me to this, for your sake, for you've as pretty and innocent a looking face as I've seen this many a day. As for the lady, who's counting on dazzling some poor fool's eyes, I shall be glad to have her disappointed."

He then took the woman aside, who since their entrance had been busy about some household affair, and did not appear to pay much attention to them, and having interchanged a few words with her, so low as not to be heard by Florence, he left the house. When Florence found that he had gone, taking the costly ear-ring with him, unable to longer control her emotion, she burst into tears.

"Come, child, there's no use in crying," said the woman. "As soon as it is fairly dark, you shall go back to where you belong."

"I don't dare to go without the ear-ring. Wont the man bring it back by-and-by, and let me have it?"

"No, child—there's no use in deceiving you. You'll never see it again—he has a use of his own for it."

"What shall I do?" said Florence. "I can't go back to Miss Harcourt without it."

"She'll beat you, I suppose?"

"I don't think she will; but I had rather she would than to keep me in the closet all night with the dead man's bones;" and as she spoke a shudder crept over her, and her eyes dilated with fear.

"Well, I'm poor, and have done things which I had better not have done, but I've more feeling than to do such a wicked thing as that. If you don't dare to go back, you're welcome to stay here. You shall fare as well as my brother and I do."

Florence reflected a while, and then said:

"I thank you, but I mustn't stay."

"You'd rather go and be shut up in the closet you speak of. Well, as I told you, as soon as it is dark, I'll show you the way. My brother told me I could, if you wasn't content to stay."

"As soon as you are ready, I should like to go," said Florence.

Florence had decided in her own mind not to return to Miss Harcourt's, though she did not mention her decision to the woman. She knew that Isabel Leeds lived in the same street, and the kindness and consideration she had manifested towards her, made her determine to go to her, and beg her to let her remain at least for the night. She had, for a long time, been so little used to being treated kindly, that had not early moral culture taught her to shrink from associating with the vicious, the sympathy manifested by the woman might have tempted her to remain where she was.

"I suppose it is best that you should go," said she, in answer to the wish expressed by Florence. "If I had a daughter as pretty as you are, I should know that this was no place for her."

"Do you remember ever being in this part of the city before?" said the woman, when it had got to be fairly dark.

"Never—I've not been in the city long."

"Well, it's time to go now. We must go out by the back door. My brother locked the other door on the outside, when he went away."

The night was cloudy and very dark, and her conductor, holding her fast by the hand, led her through what appeared to her a labyrinth of lanes and alleys. The truth was, she purposely chose

a circuitous rather than a direct way. After a while they entered a well-lighted street. The woman did not speak, but continued to pass rapidly on through several others. At last she slackened her pace, and asked Florence if she knew where she was.

"In Bleeker Street, I believe," was the child's answer.

"Yes, and you can now find the way."

"I think I can."

"Good night, then, and remember that, bad as I am, I shouldn't have the heart to treat you as cruelly as the proud lady does, you live with."

Florence bid her good night in return—thanked her for showing her the way, and looking back, saw her turn a corner. She then walked slowly along, and soon came in sight of the large and magnificent mansion of Mr. Harcourt. The sight of it inspired her with dread, and turning quickly back, she inquired of the first person she met where Mr. Leeds lived. Fortunately, he knew how to direct her, and in a few minutes she had reached the house. Isabel Leeds, accompanied by an elderly gentleman, had just arrived from the opposite direction. The strong light of the lamp in front of the mansion fell upon Florence, and Isabel saw and recognized her.

"Why have you been gone so long?" said she.

"I couldn't come before. Miss Harcourt's ear-ring is gone!"

"How did it happen? How did you lose it?"

"I didn't lose it—a man took it away from me."

"What man?"

"I don't know."

"Come, we will go into the house. This should be attended to at once."

"My poor child," said Isabel, addressing the trembling Florence, when they had entered the parlor, "come and sit down by me, and tell me all about what has happened."

Florence, whose agitation was in a measure soothed by the kindness of Isabel, related those particulars already known, in a manner so artless and unhesitating, that both Isabel and the gentleman present, whose name was Kingsley, were perfectly satisfied that what she said was true.

"I must let Hester know the fate of her ear-ring," said Isabel, when she had finished. "If I don't, as she is waiting for Florence to return,

she may be too late for the party. When I parted with her, half an hour ago, she was talking of sending to the jeweller's to inquire why Florence was so long detained."

"Are you going to send me?" said Florence, looking much alarmed.

"No, you may remain here for the present. I will send her a note."

In a few minutes the note was written, and on its way to Miss Harcourt. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Kingsley was told that there was a gentleman at the door, who wished to see him.

"If a friend, invite him in," said Isabel, as Mr. Kingsley left the room.

He soon returned, accompanied by a gentleman, whom he presented to Isabel as his friend, Austin Lisle, just arrived from China, where he had been a resident for several years. The moment Isabel had responded to his salutation, Florence approached him, and in much agitation, said:

"Uncle Austin, I thought you were dead! Mr. Byles told me you were."

"Why, this must be my little Florence, I parted with three years ago! But how came you here? I expected you were in the country. Is your mother here?"

"Mother is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir—she died more than a year ago."

"This is sad news, which I was not prepared to hear. Where have you been since she died?"

"In the almshouse till about six weeks ago."

"A daughter of Edward Lisle and Florence Linton been living in the almshouse! Why did you go there?"

"Mr. Byles carried me there. He said that all the money you let mother have was gone, and that I must be taken care of by charity."

"The last letter your mother sent me, and which I must have received about the time she died, said that she was amply provided for, for at least three years to come. This Mr. Byles, I suspect, is a dishonest man. He expected that I should remain abroad several years longer, which tempted him, I'm afraid, to pocket the money which should have been appropriated to your maintenance. You were friendless, and he imagined he should escape detection."

At this moment the door was unceremoniously opened by Hester Harcourt. Mr. Lisle sat near the door, with his arm encircling the waist of Florence, who stood at his side. She entered the room in a manner so sudden and impetuous,

that she passed on to the centre of the apartment, without being aware of their presence.

"I hope," said she, addressing Isabel, "that you didn't expect *me* to be imposed upon by the vile falsehood so cunningly fabricated by Floy Lisle, if *you* were. I never liked the child from the first. She pretended to be excessively delicate and sensitive, but I always thought that it was all mere pretence, and now I am certain it was. Where is the little thief? Have you taken her under your protection?"

Isabel had several times during this speech vainly attempted to interrupt her, and when she found her attempts unheeded, had endeavored by expressive signs to make her sensible of the presence of a stranger; but her mind was so much pre-occupied, and so disturbed by passion, she was unable to attract her attention.

"Have you taken her under your protection?" she repeated, with increased vehemence.

"Florence Lisle is here," said Isabel; "and previous to my sending you the note, I had made up my mind to let her remain here till I had an opportunity of a personal interview with you. Since then, she has unexpectedly found a natural protector, which will, in part, preclude the necessity of my interference."

"Yes," said Mr. Lisle, who rose and came forward, leading Florence by the hand, "I am the child's uncle, and am both able and willing to take care of her. I have yet to learn in what way she has excited your anger, and for what reason you call her by such an opprobrious name. The child of a mother so amiable and so exemplary as hers was, cannot be guilty of taking what does not belong to her. Will you have the goodness to tell me what cause you have to accuse her?"

"Uncle Kingsley," said Isabel, "you are acquainted with the circumstances—will you be so kind as to explain them to Mr. Lisle?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Kingsley; and as briefly as possible he made the necessary explanation.

"I promised my friend, Mrs. Burford, to attend her party this evening," said Mr. Lisle, after Mr. Kingsley had finished his narrative, "but I will send an excuse, and attend to this affair immediately. The sooner the facts of the case are made known to the detective police, the better."

"You are right," said Mr. Kingsley; "and if you please, I will go with you."

When they were gone, Hester inquired of Isabel who this Mr. Lisle was.

"He has recently arrived from China," was her answer, "and is, I presume, the gentleman you expected to meet at the party this evening, on whom you were somewhat desirous to make a favorable impression."

"And you knew this, and yet permitted me to say what I did in his presence."

"I did my best to prevent you."

"I will not dispute the point—but, remember, that we are no longer friends."

Without waiting for Isabel to reply, she left the house, and stepping into the carriage which was in waiting at the door, she was soon on her way to Mrs. Burford's party.

By the vigilance of the police, the man who robbed Florence was arrested just as he was entering the shop of a pawnbroker, whose integrity, it was suspected, was not altogether unimpeachable. The diamond ear-ring was found in the man's possession, and quickly restored to its owner.

It is not improbable that a few months afterwards, when Isabel Leeds became the bride of the wealthy Mr. Lisle, who was in every respect worthy of her esteem, that Miss Harcourt regretted having treated the friendless Florence with so little kindness and consideration.

In her uncle's house, Florence found a home in the true sense of the word, and when, at a suitable age, she was introduced into society, there were few transcended her in beauty of person, and none in moral and mental culture.



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